

The renaissance of eloquence

Group identity is born in retrospect. Founders of cultural movements are generally ignorant of their status and are assigned it posthumously. Only after a certain momentum has been built up, and the giants who are perceived to have set things going are dying or departed, does an inheriting generation look back with longing, scrambling to assemble the elements of the past that might account for its own behavior, beliefs, and budding esprit de corps. The structures erected can be fanciful, buttressed as much by myth as by fact, but they are no less real on that account. That is, although in part historically dubious, they are constitutive of a group identity that is nevertheless authentic, that provides the individuals it animates with meaningful explanations and powerful motives for action.

Something along these lines was happening in Italy in the fourth and fifth decades of the fifteenth century. This is the period when humanists began not only to “do” humanism, so to speak, but also to meditate on it. They sought to identify their own essential characteristics, precisely define their goals and higher aspirations, and investigate their particular history and place within a broader realm of culture and learning, paying special attention to those individuals they considered to be the founders of their movement, the ones responsible for making what they did a recognizable activity in its own right, separate from, and in certain cases in competition with, other activities. This contemplation was motivated at least in part by the passing of a great generation of forebears. In his funeral oration for Leonardo Bruni (d. 1444), Poggio Bracciolini complained of the cruelty of fate that had deprived him of all those to whom he had been bound most dearly and tenderly by his youthful *studia litterarum*:

We lost first Coluccio Salutati, the common father of all learned men and himself most humane and learned, then Roberto de’ Rossi and Niccolò Niccoli, men outstanding in every kind of literature and especially the *studia humanitatis*, then Lorenzo de Medici [the Elder], famous for his virtue, and

many other close friends as well. Only this one associate of our old studies remained [i.e., Bruni], this one member of our once renascent academy, so to speak, with whom I was accustomed to discuss not only our studies but also my thoughts, always bringing our conversations back to the happiness of our earlier days, when all those whom I have just mentioned were still alive.¹

The sense of loss expressed by Poggio is personal, the lament of an old man abandoned by his friends on the final leg of life's journey. For the next generation of humanists, though, the deaths of Salutati, Niccoli, Bruni, and others marked a turning point, an occasion for transforming the very significance of that loss. What for Poggio was the closing of an important but socially and personally circumscribed cultural moment, his descendents framed as the point at which a widespread movement, to which they themselves adhered, entered its maturity. They did not merely bury the dead; they erected a monument and with it a group identity, setting the stage for an independent, geographically diffused cultural movement (theoretically) open to anyone willing to invest in the ethos they channeled.

This chapter will focus on three such monuments from the 1440s and 1450s. Two are by individuals now considered to have been leading figures in the humanist movement: Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini and Biondo Flavio. The third is by an author of lesser stature, Bartolomeo Facio, but who turns out to be the most revealing of the three sources on the subject of humanist identity. When approaching these first self-conscious attempts to take stock of humanism as a widespread movement, it would be reasonable to expect them to reflect, or at least to take note of, cultural currents we have become accustomed to associate intimately with early Quattrocento humanism. For instance, they could promote a civic ideology, evince a secular outlook, advertise a specific brand of education, rain invective on cultural competitors in the world of scholasticism, or boast of the great virtue to be found solely in the *studia humanitatis*. Yet at best only a faint echo can be heard from these directions, and often nothing at all.

¹ Poggio Bracciolini, *Oratio funebris in obitu Leonardi Arretini*, in Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII*, ed. Hankins, vol. I, pp. cxvi–cxvii: “queri . . . deque fatorum injuria, quae me omnibus his privarunt, quos mecum ab ineunte adolescentia litterarum studia summa caritate, et benivolentia devinxerunt. Nam primo communem doctorum omnium parentem Colucium Salutatium humanissimum, ac doctissimum virum, tum Robertum cognomento Rusum, deinde Nicolaum Nicolum, viros omni litterarum genere, et humanitatis studiis praestantissimos, deinceps omni virtute virum celebrem Laurentium de Medicis, pluresque alios summa mihi amicitia conjunctos eripuit nobis. Restabat hic unus veterum studiorum, et quasi renascentis olim academiae socius, quocum non solum studia, sed cogitationes quoque communicare solitus eram, revocans saepe sermones nostros ad illam prioris aetatis nostrae jocunditatem, cum omnes hi viverent, quos modo nominavi.”

Instead, what we encounter, time and again, is something much more akin to the stylistic ideal described by Ronald G. Witt.² For all three authors portray humanism primarily as the revival of classical, i.e., Ciceronian Latin eloquence. Biondo and Facio extend their vision to include a broader revival of the culture of antiquity, and Facio casts the renaissance of eloquence in moral terms. A sense of recovery pervades all three authors, as does an idea of the greatness of the times, an excitement about recent and emerging achievements in the distinct realm of culture carved out by humanists.

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The first synthetic account of humanism to be considered is contained in Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's (1405–1464) *De viris illustribus*, written between 1445 and 1450.³ We could hardly begin with a more authoritative voice. Of early Quattrocento figures, Aeneas Sylvius was one of the most adept at releasing the potential for intellectual, social, economic, and political advancement that was bound up in humanism. A law-school dropout from an impoverished Siennese noble family, his mastery of Latin rhetoric and of the proper forms of chancery and diplomatic communication made him indispensable to several cardinals, anti-Pope Felix V, Emperor Frederick III, and even to his erstwhile adversary, Pope Eugenius IV. His silver tongue brought him further still. It made him an influential participant

² Witt, *Footsteps*.

³ The bibliography on Piccolomini is immense. The foundational study remains Georg Voigt, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini, als Papst Pius der Zweite, und sein Zeitalter*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1856–1863). For more recent treatments, see at least R.J. Mitchell, *The Laurels and the Tiara: Pope Pius II, 1458–1464* (London, 1962); Eugenio Garin, *Ritratti di umanisti* (Florence, 1967), pp. 3–39; *Enea Silvio Piccolomini Papa Pio II. Atti del convegno per il V centenario della morte e altri scritti*, ed. Domenico Maffei (Siena, 1968); Gioacchino Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini: L'umanesimo sul soglio di Pietro* (Ravenna, 1978); *Pio II e la cultura del suo tempo. Atti del I convegno internazionale – 1989*, ed. Luisa Rotondi Secchi Tarugi (Milan, 1991).

The most recent edition, and also the most complete and reliable, is Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *De viris illustribus*, ed. Adrianus van Heck (Vatican City, 1991), hereafter referred to as Piccolomini, *DVI*. On the state of the text see also Hermann Diener, “*Fridericus dux Austriae Ernesti filius* aus *De viris illustribus* des Enea Silvio Piccolomini,” *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, 28 (1986), pp. 185–208. On *DVI* see Paolo Viti, “Osservazioni sul *De viris aetate sua claris* di Enea Silvio Piccolomini,” in *Pio II e la cultura del suo tempo*, pp. 199–214. Viti (p. 202) notes that the autograph ms. (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3887) of the *DVI* also contains letters signed “*episcopus tergestinus*,” dated 1449 and 1450, and thus assigns it to this period, but Adrianus van Heck, “*Ad lectorem*,” in Piccolomini, *De viris illustribus*, pp. v–xv, places the composition more broadly between 1445 and 1450. Diener (pp. 191–196) considers the issue of date at length on the basis of both internal and external evidence; he places the drafting of the *vita* of Frederick III at the beginning of 1446 and identifies November 26, 1449 as the *terminus ante quem* for the whole work. For a consideration of the structure of Piccolomini's *DVI*, see Viti, “Osservazioni,” pp. 202–204, and in greater detail Sabine Schmolinsky, “*Biographie und Zeitgeschichte bei Enea Silvio Piccolomini: Überlegungen zum Texttyp von 'De viris illustribus'*,” *Humanistica Iovaniensis*, 44 (1995), pp. 79–89.

at imperial diets and Church councils alike and eventually launched him to the episcopacy and then the papacy itself. After Nicholas V (1447–1555, born Tommaso Parentucelli) he was the second humanist to become pope, at which point he assumed his second Virgilian name, Pius II (1458–1464). Yet Piccolomini's papacy, which is remembered most for ending in a failed Crusade, is less important for his status as a humanist than are his many literary works, which include histories, poetry, countless letters, a novel, a lengthy memoir, an educational treatise, and the text to be discussed here, the *De viris illustribus*.

In this work of collective biography, Piccolomini assembled the most important personages of his time in politics and culture from all over Europe: kings, queens, and princes, *condottieri*, popes, cardinals, bishops, monks and friars, jurisconsults and men of letters. Although sizeable and stylistically polished, the work seems nevertheless to have been left unfinished.⁴ In his own opusculum of the same name, Bartolomeo Facio claims that Piccolomini's *De viris illustribus* was dedicated to Alfonso the Magnanimous, which might suggest that it was at some point completed and that the dedication copy has been lost.⁵ Whatever the case may be, the literary work as it is extant today has no proem and no dedicatory letter, and thus also no explicit explanation of its object.

As far as can be distilled from its contents, the central theme is the politics of the Church, of Italy, and of Europe in general.⁶ As the vast majority of the individuals treated were men of action, it should be no surprise that the intellectual component to their lives remains for the most part on the margins of their biographies. It is considered as one of many aspects – and hardly ever the most important – contributing to the composition of their character. For example, Niccolò d'Este is reported to have loved literature (*studia litterarum*) and patronized its foremost representatives, even employing the eminent schoolmaster Guarino Veronese and the Sicilian

⁴ See Van Heck, "Ad lectorem," pp. vi–ix, and Schmolinsky, "Biographie und Zeitgeschichte," pp. 82 and 86, who, however, disagree as to whether the beginning (Schmolinsky) or the end (Van Heck) of the work is defective.

⁵ Assuming, that is, that the work Facio calls *De egregiis dictis, ac factis clarorum hominum* and says was dedicated to Alfonso is indeed the same as the work that has come down to us under the title *De viris illustribus*. See Facio, *DVI*, p. 26. See note 34 below, however, for a consideration that weakens this hypothesis.

⁶ This pan-European vision might help to rehabilitate Piccolomini's status as "Father of the Concept of Europe," recently called into question by Johannes Helmuth, "Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pius II.) – Ein Humanist als Vater des Europagedankens?," in R. Hohls, I. Schröder, and H. Siegrist (eds.), *Europa und die Europäer. Quellen und Essays zur modernen europäischen Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 2005), pp. 361–366.

humanist Giovanni Aurispa as tutors to his sons.⁷ Such crumbs can be gathered as they fall from Piccolomini's table in order to reconstruct his concept of humanism, but it must be recognized that they are not representative of the feast prepared.⁸ Aeneas Sylvius, although himself a leading – if not *the* leading – humanist of his day, is here (as elsewhere) primarily interested in politics. Nevertheless, one major humanist, Leonardo Bruni,⁹ is singled out for the honor of a full biography – a biography that quickly turns into a brief history of humanism.

Piccolomini assigns Bruni the role of protagonist, if not of true founder, of the renaissance of classical Latin. As he reports, Bruni distinguished himself as apostolic secretary to John XXIII and Martin V before taking charge of the Florentine chancery. More importantly, “he wrote very elegantly,”¹⁰ putting his pen both to translations (of Aristotle, Plutarch, St. Basil, and Xenophon) and to original compositions of all kinds, such as biographies, orations, works of moral philosophy, histories, and dialogues.¹¹ From these works emerges the reason for Bruni's great reputation and thus his inclusion in Piccolomini's work: “with his writing Bruni exceeded everyone . . . nor has our age found his equal.”¹²

Somewhat surprising is the fact that, according to Piccolomini, Bruni owed his famed eloquence not to his father figure, Coluccio Salutati, but to his Greek teacher, the Byzantine scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras.¹³ Citing from the beginning of the biography:

⁷ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 22.18–27.

⁸ Cf. Viti, “Osservazioni,” p. 205, who notes desultory references to the humanist activity of Francesco Barbaro and Francesco Filelfo, as well as to Cosimo de' Medici's founding of the library in San Marco.

⁹ The bibliography on Bruni is quite large, although he still lacks a proper biography. As an ersatz see the first eight essays in James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Rome, 2003–2004), vol. I, pp. 9–239, along with *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, trs. Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson (Binghamton, NY, 1987) for a biographical sketch (pp. 3–50) and an overview and contextualization of his writings (*passim*). See also Cesare Vasoli, “Leonardo Bruni,” in *DBI*, vol. XIV (1972), pp. 618–633; and for a brief *ritratto*, Lucia Gualdo Rosa, “Bruni, Leonardo (1370–1444),” in Colette Nativel (ed.), *Centuria Latinae. Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières offertes à Jacques Chomarat* (Geneva, 1997), pp. 1057–1062.

¹⁰ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 34: “scripsit hic admodum ornate.”

¹¹ The “dialogues” mentioned are presumably the two dialogues that make up the *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* but might also include the *Isagogicon moralis disciplinae*, which was written in dialogue form.

¹² Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36: “omnes scribendo superavit Aretinus . . . nec etas nostra parem invenit.”

¹³ For Chrysoloras, see Riccardo Maisano and Antonio Rollo (eds.), *Manuele Crisolora e il ritorno del greco in Occidente. Atti del convegno internazionale: Napoli, 26–29 giugno 1997* (Naples, 2002); and Mariarosaria Cortesi, “Umanesimo greco,” in *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo: 1. Il medioevo latino*, 5 vols. (Rome, 1992–1998), vol. III, pp. 457–507.

He first studied literature under Salutati, who was then chancellor of Florence. And then he advanced further under Manuel Chrysoloras of Constantinople, who . . . had come to Italy and reintroduced the ancient method and Ciceronian style of writing. For Coluccio retained [in his style] certain follies typical of his time. He was therefore surpassed by Leonardo, who in some of his letters to Coluccio even warns him about his errors and exhorts him to abandon the squalor of his age.¹⁴

At first sight it surely must seem strange that a Byzantine Greek was responsible for reintroducing into Italy the ancient manner of writing Latin, not to mention Ciceronian style. Such is especially the case in light of the fact that Chrysoloras never gained a full command of Latin¹⁵ and that he certainly knew it less well when in Florence, one of his first permanent residences in Italy. It was, however, a commonplace in fifteenth-century humanism that only by learning Greek could one develop an appropriate Latin style – an idea that goes back to Cicero himself.¹⁶ This notion dovetailed, more importantly, with a broader humanist tradition according to which Chrysoloras was the fountainhead of humanist Latin eloquence. As Christine Smith has shown, Piccolomini joined Guarino Veronese, Poggio Bracciolini, and others in voicing this *communis opinio*.¹⁷ Smith sees more than mere encomium at work here, arguing instead that Chrysoloras provided the Italians with essential theoretical and conceptual tools for the composition of Latin – a thesis that will be revisited in

¹⁴ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 34.2–10: “litteras sub Coluccio Pierio, qui tunc Florentinorum cancellarius erat, edidit. postea sub Manuele Chrisolora Constantinopolitano, qui . . . Italiam intraverat priscumque modum scribendi ac ciceronianum morem induxerat, magis profecit. nam Coluccius ineptias quasdam sui seculi retinebat; itaque superatus est a Leonardo, qui etiam in quibusdam epistolis ad eum scribens suorum eum errorum admonet suadetque, ut squalorem illum sui temporis deserat.” Bruni had tried to save Salutati’s reputation from precisely this kind of attack by (unsuccessfully) suppressing these letters from his epistolary. See James Hankins, “Notes on the Textual Tradition of Leonardo Bruni’s *Epistulae familiares*,” in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 63–84, at 72 [reprinted from Vincenzo Fera and Giacomo Ferraù (eds.), *Filologia umanistica per Gianvito Resta* (Padua, 1997), vol. II, pp. 1023–1062].

¹⁵ So much is clear from Chrysoloras’ collaboration with Uberto Decembrio in translating Plato’s *Republic*. Cf. James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1990), vol. I, p. 108.

¹⁶ James Hankins, “Lo studio del greco in occidente fra medioevo ed età moderna,” in Salvatore Settis (ed.), *I Greci: Storia Cultura Arte Società*, vol. III: *I Greci oltre la Grecia* (Turin, 2001), pp. 1245–1262, at 1252–1253 [reprinted in English in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 273–291]. On the study of Greek in the Renaissance, see Federica Ciccolella, *Donati Graeci: Learning Greek in the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2009); and Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 99–121. Cicero’s view of Greek’s role in Latin eloquence is found in *De oratore* I, 4 and I, 34, 155.

¹⁷ Christine Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eloquence, 1400–1470* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 133–135. Smith is wrong (p. 134), however, to attribute the same opinion to Bruni on the basis of his *Memoirs*. There Bruni only discusses Chrysoloras’ role in his Greek studies, not his acquisition of Latin eloquence. See Bruni, *Memoirs*, pp. 320–323 (pars. 24–26).

Chapter 3.¹⁸ For now, let it suffice to underline that, in Piccolomini's view, Bruni's classical style was not born full-grown out of the head of Zeus, nor much less from Salutati's Latin, which is here described as defective, full of errors ("follies"), and polluted by the "squalor of his age," but instead from Chrysoloras' teaching.

Piccolomini then sets Bruni's stylistic achievement within the context of a short history of the Latin language, tracing its perfection, decline, and rebirth in an arc that spans from Cicero to Bruni himself:

For literature, too, gives way to change, as one kind belongs to one age and another to another. From its very founders, the Latin language developed continually in the elegance of its expression and literary study up to the time of Cicero, when it achieved its true fullness and could not possibly have evolved further, since it was then at its apex. It remained there for many years down to the likes of Jerome and Gregory [the Great], although not without diminution, and thereafter it died out utterly. For after that period no ornate writer of the language was to be found. Later, Francesco Petrarca gave Latin a little luster, but it was Manuel who brought more light to it, and he was followed by Leonardo.¹⁹

Piccolomini conceives of Latin historically and in terms of a natural process of evolution and decline. Good Latin lasted from the time of Cicero more or less to that of Gregory the Great, but then it died in the Middle Ages. With Petrarch it began a slow and barely perceptible recovery, but it was Chrysoloras and then Bruni who were responsible for its true resuscitation. For Aeneas Sylvius, the best style of Latin was Ciceronian, and thus the re-establishment of good Latin meant reascending to that ancient apex.

¹⁸ See below, pp. 145–146.

¹⁹ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 34.11–20: "Patiuntur nempe et littere mutationem; nam alie sunt uno, alie alio tempore. ab ipsis etenim lingue latine repertoribus ornatus dicendi et studia litterarum continuo creverunt usque ad tempora Ciceronis, ubi vere plenitudinem acceperunt nec amplius crescere potuerunt, cum jam essent in culmine. manserunt igitur postea per plures annos ac usque ad Jeronimum atque Gregorium viguerunt, non tamen absque minutione, exin perierunt funditus; nec enim post illa tempora qui ornate scripserit reperitur. post Franciscus Petrarcha aliquantulum splendoris litteris dedit, sed Emanuel maiorem attulit lucem, quem secutus est Leonardus." Aeneas Sylvius' source for the history of Latin literature might have been Bruni's *Vita del Petrarca*. See Leonardo Bruni, *Opere letterarie e politiche*, ed. Paolo Viti (Turin, 1996), pp. 537–557, at 554 (English translation in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, pp. 85–100, at 97). Viti, "Osservazioni," p. 209 notes that this vision of the history of Latin was "non nuova ma ormai comune . . . diffusa nella tradizione umanistica." He traces the drawing of its specific contours to Sicco Polenton's *Scriptorum illustrium latinae linguae libri*. For further considerations on this tradition and its origins ca. 1400 (but also somewhat in Boccaccio), see James Hankins, "Petrarch and the Canon of Neo-Latin Literature," *Quaderni petrarcheschi*, 17–18 (2007–2008), pp. 905–922.

Bruni led the climb – “for he was the most similar to Cicero”²⁰ – but he was followed by a team well equipped to reach the summit. Indeed, the future pope dedicates half of the biography to these other humanists, many of them Bruni’s personal friends, highlighting their contributions to the rebirth of Ciceronian eloquence. The text is relatively short and will be well worth considering in its entirety.

Niccolò Niccoli functioned as “arbiter of knowledge,” thanks to his expertise in both Latin and Greek, his very great learning, and his excellent judgment. At his death he left a priceless library.²¹ “Nevertheless he never wrote or spoke in Latin,” and not only because he “distrusted his own talent.” He was so used to criticizing others (verbally) that he feared the criticism he might receive in return. He was indeed so abusive that he even managed to alienate his one-time best friend, Bruni. Niccoli’s fastidiousness was legend: “he approved not one living person, and of the dead only four: Plato, Virgil, Jerome, and Horace.”²²

In the same period flourished Ambrogio Traversari, general of the Camaldolensian Order.²³ He was known for his many Latin translations of Greek literature, as well as for his ability as a diplomat (*orator*). He represented Eugenius IV at the Council of Basel and at Sigismund’s court in Hungary.

Poggio Bracciolini, “although he did not know Greek, spoke Latin better than everyone.” Apostolic secretary in Constance, he wrote many things, especially dialogues. In later life he suffered infamy for marrying a much, much younger, and beautiful, woman; his defense consisted of the “witty and elegant” *Whether an Old Man Should Marry (An seni sit uxor ducenda)*.²⁴

²⁰ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.22–23: “nam simillimus Ciceroni fuit.”

²¹ Ibid., p. 35.17–18: “in libris autem circiter quatuor milia aureorum moriens reliquit.” On Niccoli’s library, see Berthold L. Ullman and Philip A. Stadter, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence: Niccolò Niccoli, Cosimo de’ Medici and the Library of San Marco* (Padua, 1972).

²² Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 35.7–18; 12: “arbiter of knowledge” (“arbiter de scientia”); 13–14: “never wrote or spoke . . .” (“numquam tamen vel scripsit vel locutus est latine”); 14: “distrusted his own talent” (“diffidebat enim ingenio suo”); 16–17: “approved not one . . .” (“nullum enim viventem commendavit, ex mortuis solum quatuor: Platonem, Virgilium, Jeronimum et Oratium”). Piccolomini offers precious testimony to Niccoli’s knowledge of Greek, which most modern scholars do not credit (including Davies [below], p. 128). On Niccoli and the difficulty of knowing anything about him with certainty, see Martin C. Davies, “An Emperor without Clothes? Niccolò Niccoli under Attack,” *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 30 (1987), pp. 95–148. See also Giuseppe Zippel’s work on Niccoli, collected in his *Storia e cultura del Rinascimento italiano*, ed. Gianni Zippel (Padua, 1979), and further bibliography in Davies, “Emperor,” p. 95, n. 1 and p. 101, n. 20.

²³ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 35.19–23. For Traversari, see Charles L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and Christian Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance* (Albany, 1997).

²⁴ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 35.24–36.10; 35.24–25: “although he did not know Greek . . .” (qui licet grece lingue ignarus fuerit, nulli tamen in dicendo fuit inferior”); 36.9–10: “witty and elegant” (“non

A number of other humanists receive shorter treatments. Guarino Veronese is commemorated for his teaching of rhetoric in Ferrara and for his translation work.²⁵ The Augustinian Andrea Biglia was an historian.²⁶ The Franciscan Antonio da Rho wrote on Latin style.²⁷ Bartolomeo da Montepulciano was secretary, counselor, and friend to Martin V.²⁸ Giovanni Aurispa and Antonio Beccadelli also enjoyed great fame.²⁹

Returning briefly to Bruni, Piccolomini then notes that he was succeeded as Florentine chancellor by Carlo Marsuppini.³⁰ Like his predecessor, Marsuppini knew Greek and Latin, and he was as elegant a poet as a prose writer. He had already translated some Greek poetry into Latin at the time of Piccolomini's writing; greater things are expected of him still.

Finally, the biography concludes with a summary of the state of eloquence in Piccolomini's native Siena. At one time it had employed the "vir elegans" Berto di Antonio as chancellor, but now the city could boast of the talents of another native son, Francesco Patrizi, who was famous for his learning, his knowledge of "both languages," and his teaching of rhetoric.³¹

infacetum neque inornatum"). One wonders if Piccolomini was ignorant of Poggio's moderate ability in Greek, or whether our author was simply in agreement with the many in his day who considered Poggio's ability to be considerably less than moderate. For Poggio, see Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke* (Hildesheim, 1974). For his knowledge of Greek, see *ibid.*, pp. 228–232.

²⁵ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 35.23–25. For the revered humanist educator Guarino, see Gino Pistilli, "Guarini, Guarino (Guarino Veronese, Varino)," in *DBI*, vol. LX (2003), pp. 357–369.

²⁶ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.10–12. On Biglia, see the article (no author) "Biglia, Andrea (Andrea da Milano, Andrea de Biliis)," in *DBI*, vol. X (1968), pp. 413–415; Rudolph Arbesmann, "Andrea Biglia, Augustinian Friar and Humanist," *Analecta Augustiniana*, 28 (1965), pp. 154–218; and Joseph C. Schnaubelt, "Andrea Biglia (ca. 1394–1435), His Life and Writings," *Augustiniana*, 43 (1993), pp. 103–159.

²⁷ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.12–14. For Antonio da Rho, see David A. Rutherford, *Early Renaissance Invective and the Controversies of Antonio da Rho* (Tempe, 2005); and Riccardo Fubini, "Antonio da Rho," in *DBI*, vol. III (1961), pp. 574–577. The work to which Piccolomini refers is likely *De imitatione eloquentiae*.

²⁸ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.14–20. For Bartolomeo da Montepulciano, see "Aragazzi, Bartolomeo," in *DBI*, vol. III (1961), pp. 686–688.

²⁹ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.20–21. For Aurispa, known principally as a teacher and for bringing a hoard of Greek manuscripts to Italy, see Emilio Bigi, "Aurispa, Giovanni" in *DBI*, 4 (1962), pp. 593–595. For Beccadelli, who began the humanist academy in Naples, see Gianvito Resta, "Beccadelli, Antonio, detto il Panormita," in *DBI*, vol. VII (1965), pp. 400–406.

³⁰ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 37.1–5. For Marsuppini, see Paolo Viti, "Marsuppini, Carlo," in *DBI*, vol. LXXI (2008), pp. 14–22.

³¹ For Berto di Antonio Berti, who served several times as chancellor of Siena and was a friend of Bruni, see Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 37.6–7; and Gianfranco Fioravanti, "Alcuni aspetti della cultura umanistica senese nel '400," *Rinascimento*, ser. 2, 19 (1979), pp. 117–167 [reprinted in Fioravanti, *Università e città: cultura umanistica e cultura scolastica a Siena nel '400* (Florence, 1980)]. For Francesco Patrizi da Siena, now best known for his political thought, see Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 37.9–11 (10–11: "knows both languages" ["linguam utramque novit"]); and Felice Battaglia, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini e Francesco Patrizi: due politici senesi del Quattrocento* (Florence, 1936).

Admittedly, this roll call of humanists is far from complete. Other important exponents of early Quattrocento humanism are conspicuously, curiously absent, such as Pier Paolo Vergerio and Gasparino Barzizza (to name only two). Not only did both achieve pan-Italian renown, but Vergerio was a friend of Bruni and fellow Chrysoloras student, and Barzizza educated a whole line of humanists including Beccadelli and, like Bartolomeo da Montepulciano, served Martin V as secretary.³² In addition, a few eminent humanists crop up in other biographies but not in this one: Vittorino da Feltre as tutor to Gianfrancesco Gonzaga's progeny in Mantua, Francesco Barbaro as a leading *litteratus* in Francesco Foscari's Venice, and Francesco Filelfo as a teacher of rhetoric and an enemy of Cosimo de' Medici.³³ Cosimo himself is remembered for his patronage of humanism, although strangely his building of the library of San Marco, while mentioned, is not related to the book collection of Niccolò Niccoli that formed its core.³⁴ Furthermore, still other figures appear in Piccolomini's *De viris illustribus* who share important attributes with the humanists but are not grouped with them in the Bruni biography. Three are full-fledged biographees: Bernardino of Siena "devoted his youth to the study of eloquence"; the Sienese jurist Mariano Sozzini is called *eloquens* and is noted as a writer of "elegant poetry and ornate prose"; and the Milanese bishop Bartolomeo della Capra, whom modern scholars would unhesitatingly consider a humanist, is accordingly described as a lover of poetry as well as a master of prose and especially of epistolary style.³⁵ Others include Rafaele

³² For Vergerio, author of the popular educational treatise *De ingenuis moribus*, see John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder: The Humanist as Orator* (Tempe, 1996). For the influential teacher Barzizza, see R.G.G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza: With Special Reference to His Place in Paduan Humanism* (London, 1979); and Lucia Gualdo Rosa (ed.), *Gasparino Barzizza e la rinascita degli studi classici. Fra continuità e rinnovamento. Atti del seminario di studi, Napoli – Palazzo Sforza, 11 aprile 1997* (Naples, 1999).

³³ For Vittorino, see Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 25.27–28: "cui [i.e., Carlo Gonzaga] magister fuit Victorinus, grece ac latine lingue peritissimus"; for Barbaro, p. 29.22–23: "Inter litteratos apud Venetos primum obtinet Franciscus Barbaro, qui latinam et grecam linguam novit"; for Filelfo, see p. 33.12–14: "huic [i.e., Cosimo de' Medici] Philelphus, qui oratoriam Florentie legit, infensus fuit; nam parti adverse favebat; que res eum ex urbe precipitavit."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.5–9, 11–12: "in Florentia claustrum Sancti Marci . . . confecit. ubi . . . bibliotheca mirabilis latinis et grecis libris referta . . . faveat hic vir etiam litteris et presertim oratorii." Inexplicably, the rather long biography of another great *litteratorum fautor*, Alfonso the Magnanimous, makes no mention of his extensive patronage of humanism; this omission would seem to militate against the possibility that Alfonso was the dedicatee of Piccolomini's work.

³⁵ For Bernardino, see *ibid.*, p. 37.13–14: "eloquentie studiis adolescentiam suam ac juri pontificio tradidit"; as well as Raoul Manselli, "Bernardino da Siena, santo," in *DBI*, vol. IX (1967), pp. 215–226; and, among recent studies in English, Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1999). For Sozzini, see p. 41.26–27: "fuit eloquens, carmen fecit elegans, prosa scripsit ornate"; and Paolo Nardi, *Mariano*

Adorno (Doge of Genoa) and Francesco Pizzolpasso (Capra's successor in Milan), both "highly lettered," as well as the Franciscans Alberto da Sarteano, a student of Guarino, and Antonio da Massa Marittima, who knew Greek and Latin.³⁶

These apparent irregularities might seem to detract from Piccolomini's account of humanism, but they actually help to draw its contours more sharply. For the omission of the Franciscans suggests that they were not associated in Piccolomini's mind with humanism; of others, that humanism was not what distinguished them on this rhetorical occasion. Let us begin with the latter men. Sozzini is praised first and foremost as a jurisconsult, Adorno as a statesman. Capra and Pizzolpasso appear in episcopal garb, that is as ecclesiastical power brokers. In the context of the *De viris illustribus*, devoted as it is to describing the political, and only secondarily the cultural, landscape of Europe, it makes sense for these men to be considered separately and, primarily, with regard to their political role or status. The individuals populating the biography of Bruni, on the other hand, are described as having distinguished themselves primarily in the context of humanism. That is, as opposed to the other "illustrious men" in Piccolomini's collection, their importance consisted mainly in having contributed to the revival of classical Latin eloquence.³⁷

Sozzini, giureconsulto senese del quattrocento (Milan, 1974). Interestingly, Sozzini is depicted as a "Renaissance man" in the manner often associated with Leon Battista Alberti. The biography continues (pp. 41.27–42.4): "pinxit scripsitque manu propria admodum pulcre, cum juvenis fuit, pila lusit, jaciebat lapidem, luctari scivit, in musicis et litteris novit, saltavit. omnia scivit, que hominem liberum scire phas est, sed cantare ignoravit. geometriam, arismetricam astrologiamque novit." For Capra, see p. 44.23–26: "fuit autem vir admodum doctus, sed poetice magis datus quam aliis scientiis; semper enim Virgilium ante se habuit elegantesque versus fecit, scriptis tamen et prosam ornatam maximeque in epistolari genere floruit"; and Dieter Girgensohn, "Capra, Bartolomeo della," *DBI*, XIX (1976), pp. 108–113.

³⁶ For Adorno, see Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 43.15–16: "vir litterarum multarum et prudentie singularis"; and Giuseppe Oreste, "Adorno, Raffaele," in *DBI*, vol. I (1960), pp. 304–305. For Pizzolpasso, p. 44.29: "vir multarum litterarum et continui studii"; and Riccardo Fubini, *Umanesimo e secolarizzazione da Petrarca a Valla* (Rome, 1990), pp. 77–135. For Alberto da Sarteano, p. 40.7: "eloquentiam doctus sub Guarino"; and Enrico Cerulli, "Berdini, Alberto (in religione Alberto da Sarteano)," in *DBI*, vol. VIII (1966), pp. 800–804. For Antonio da Massa Marittima, p. 40.29: "qui grecis et latinis litteris eruditus erat"; and Riccardo Pratesi, "Antonio da Massa Marittima," in *DBI*, vol. III (1961), pp. 555–556.

³⁷ A different view is taken by Schmolinsky, "Biographie und Zeitgeschichte," pp. 83–84, who argues that the sequence (found in Piccolomini's autograph *index nominum* on the margins of fol. 92v of Vat. lat. 3887 but not mirrored exactly in the actual sequence of biographies found in *DVI*) of Bruni, Mariano Sozzini, Giovanni da Imola, and Bartolomeo della Capra represents a mini-group of "gelehrte Humanisten" (p. 83) within *DVI*. While I would agree with Schmolinsky that Piccolomini intends to group together all learned men (*Gelehrten*) in this section of his work, I would, for the reasons adduced in the present and following paragraphs, disagree with her that Piccolomini considers all of these individuals primarily (or at all) to be humanists. Similarly, Viti,

This reasoning is supported by a structural aspect of Piccolomini's work, which tends to gather several individuals constitutive of a distinct, coherent group under the heading of a single, exemplary biography. Bruni's *vita* provides the occasion for a sketch of leading humanists. Bernardino of Siena's, in turn, is a locus for a resume of influential Franciscans. In the same way, Mario Sozzini's biography ends with a description of the state of civil and canon law in Siena, and Giovanni da Imola's does the same for Bologna. Although it might be an exaggeration to say that Piccolomini has a precise method, it is nevertheless clear that he consistently uses the biography of the most prominent individual in a given field as a *voce* under which to describe that field in greater detail. Bruni is the *voce* for humanism.

As for the inexplicable displacement of Vittorino, Barbaro, and Filelfo, perhaps it can be chalked up to what might be called Piccolomini's stream-of-consciousness style.³⁸ For even though the *De viris illustribus* appears to have been composed according to a few relatively strict organizing principles – e.g., a division between Italians and non-Italians, religious figures treated before secular ones, an order of descending hierarchy³⁹ – the appearance of individual figures, both biographical subjects and incidental characters, nevertheless seems to be guided largely by association with the present context or with what has come before.⁴⁰ Considering also that the text that has come down to us is not a finished copy but a draft, it should be no surprise if it lacks rigor, completeness, or ascertainable coherence. Therefore, the fact that these three individuals do not reappear in the Bruni biography should probably not be seen as a statement on their status as humanists.

"Osservazioni," p. 203, refers to this sequence as "meno omogenea" and likewise differentiates between the individuals it comprises: "l'umanista Leonardo Bruni, San Bernardino da Siena, i giurisperiti Mariano Sozzini e Giovanni da Imola, . . . l'arcivescovo di Milano Bartolomeo Capra." Elsewhere he groups Bruni, Giovanni da Imola, and Mariano Sozzini as "uomini di cultura" (p. 205) but specifies that Bruni is "l'unico letterato inserito a pieno titolo nel *De viris*" (p. 206).

³⁸ It cannot be explained, at least not consistently, by hypothesizing that Piccolomini did not desire to mention individual figures more than once, and thus that these three could be omitted because they had already taken the stage. As noted above (note 7), Guarino and Aurispa appear as humanists in the biography of Niccolò d'Este before that of Bruni.

³⁹ See Viti, "Osservazioni," p. 202, and especially Schmolinsky, "Biographie und Zeitgeschichte," *passim*, who soundly refutes Voigt's earlier view (quoted on p. 81) that *DVI* is "ohne sonderliche Ordnung." Cf. Voigt, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini*, vol. II, p. 324.

⁴⁰ Although the categories of illustrious men he treats are clearly chosen and rather strictly adhered to, Piccolomini generally appears to meander his way through the individuals composing each of these categories (popes, cardinals, secular rulers, etc.). Schmolinsky, "Biographie und Zeitgeschichte," specifically notes, for example, the odd placement of the biographies of Tommaso Fregoso (Thomas Fulgosius, p. 84) and the anti-pope Benedict XIII (Petrus de Luna, p. 85).

Such a statement does, however, seem to be made with regard to Bernardino of Siena, Alberto da Sarteano, and Antonio da Massa Marittima, who are depicted as central figures in Franciscan preaching and the hierarchy of the Order. Piccolomini describes Bernardino as a master orator, capable of “bringing people now to tears, now to laughter, and bending their minds whichever way he wanted.”⁴¹ Unlike Bruni *et alii*, however, Bernardino’s primary medium was the vernacular, not Latin.⁴² More importantly, Franciscan eloquence was fundamentally different from its humanistic counterpart, as can be seen in the description of Alberto da Sarteano:

He first was taught eloquence and instructed in secular literature under Guarino, but then he became a Minorite and learned the eloquence of God under Bernardino, and he preached to the people quite graciously.⁴³

The implication is clear: the classical Latin eloquence pursued by the humanists was distinct from and indeed unsuited to the vernacular eloquence of preaching; in their object as well as their application, the former tended to be worldly while the latter was divine.

It is tempting to see in this distinction support for the notion, most notably associated with the work of Riccardo Fubini, that humanism was a secular or secularizing movement.⁴⁴ Fubini traces a line of descent from Petrarch to the most prominent humanists of the early Quattrocento, above all Poggio and Lorenzo Valla, identifying in them an ideology of liberation from medieval scholasticism and from the Church’s concerns and authority. As opposed to a bygone tendency to associate humanism with paganism, Fubini emphasizes instead that humanists offered an alternative moral vision within the larger Christian tradition – an apostolic ethics not of the cloth but of a proper life in the world. It was characteristic for them to wage the polemics of their secular ideology on the battleground of patristic exegesis, and these polemics could spill over into rabid anticlericalism.

⁴¹ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 37: “homines nunc ad lacrimas, nunc ad risum trahebat, flectebatque mentes hominum, quocumque volebat.”

⁴² Schmolinsky, “Biographie und Zeitgeschichte,” p. 84, views the matter differently: “*Eloquentia Dei*, die er [sc. Piccolomini] auch an den Schülern des Predigers [sc. Bernardino] hervorhob, sicherte diesem einen Platz unter den humanistischen Gelehrten nahe dem Sienesen Sozzini.” But she does not note that Piccolomini intentionally sets Bernardino’s *eloquentia Dei* against Guarino’s *litterae seculares* (see note 43 below), thus clearly contrasting the eloquence of preachers with that of humanists.

⁴³ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 40.7–10: “eloquentiam doctus sub Guarino litterisque secularibus apprime instructus et ipse postea Minor factus sub Bernardino eloquentiam Dei didicit predicavitque populis cum magna gratia.”

⁴⁴ Most prominently in *Umanesimo e secolarizzazione* and “L’umanista: ritorno di un paradigma? Saggio per un profilo storico da Petrarca ad Erasmo,” in Fubini, *L’umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici*, pp. 15–72.

Piccolomini, whose own reputation teetered between worldly indulgence and holy aspirations and who, after his election to the papacy, famously urged the world to reject Aeneas and accept Pius, would seem to be a touchstone for this issue.⁴⁵ Significantly, he barely names any humanist contributions to religious literature, and none at all in the case of Traversari, who was an assiduous translator of the Greek Fathers.⁴⁶ Furthermore, of the humanists selected for his account, Antonio da Rho was a religious who defended the study of secular literature, and Andrea Biglia wrote against Bernardino, an embattled figure among the humanists, accusing him of a hypocritical desire for fame, ignorance of the Bible, and for flirting with heresy.⁴⁷ Piccolomini does not adduce these titles, however, and, arguing in the same manner, one could just as easily point out that Traversari was an enthusiastic supporter of Bernardino, as, indeed, was Piccolomini himself.⁴⁸ Aeneas Sylvius does mention one (quite famous and influential) humanist text critical of Bernardino: Poggio's *De avaritia*, which he judges as *elegans*. Yet here, instead of joining the chorus against the Franciscan's preaching, he quips disparagingly that Poggio wrote on avarice "even though, in the manner of men more keenly aware of others' vices than of their own, he himself could in no way be thought liberal."⁴⁹ Rather than

⁴⁵ For an English translation of the official letter, *In minoribus*, in which Pius discusses his character, see Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *Reject Aeneas, Accept Pius: Selected Letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)*, intr. and tr. Thomas M. Izbicki, Gerald Christianson, and Philip Krey (Washington, DC, 2006), pp. 392–406.

⁴⁶ He says only generically that Traversari "translated many Greek texts into Latin" (Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 35.20–21: "plurima ex grecis operibus in latinum vertit"). For Traversari's patristic studies, see Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers*, pp. 83–166.

⁴⁷ Antonio da Rho defended *bonae litterae* in his *In Lactantium* (1443); see Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, vol. I, pp. 148–149; and Rutherford, *Early Renaissance Invective*, pp. 14–16. Biglia's impotent attack on Bernardino is entitled *De institutis, discipulis et doctrina fratris Bernardini* (1426–1427); see Fubini, "Antonio da Rho." For a discussion of San Bernardino and Poggio, see Fubini, *Umanesimo e secolarizzazione*, pp. 183–219.

⁴⁸ See Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers*, pp. 61–66. In the biography of Bernardino in the *De viris illustribus*, Piccolomini recounts that he was tempted to join the Franciscans after hearing Bernardino preach in Siena: "Is cum Senis predicaret, me intantum commovit, ut paululum abfuerit, quin et ego religionem suam ingrederer. sed amicorum preces me retraxerunt; quod pro meliori recipio; nescimus enim, quid nobis magis expediat" (*DVI*, p. 38.19–22).

⁴⁹ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.3–5: "scripsit De avaritia elegantem tractatum, quamvis ipse more hominum, qui aliena potius quam sua pernoscunt vitia, nequaquam liberalis putetur." The *De viris illustribus* might also contain a silent, intertextual reproach of Poggio. Piccolomini's description of Bernardino (p. 37: "homines nunc ad lacrimas, nunc ad risum trahebat, flectebatque mentes hominum, quocumque volebat") is very similar to one found in *De avaritia*: "una in re maxime excellit, in persuadendo ac excitandum affectibus flectit populum et quo vult deducit, movens ad lachrymas et cum res patitur ad risum" (quoted in Fubini, *Umanesimo e secolarizzazione*, p. 190). As Fubini explains (p. 191), though, Poggio ultimately accuses Bernardino for misusing the power of his eloquence ("verum in una re . . . errare mihi videntur et ipse et caeteri huiusmodi praedicatores. Nam cum multa loquantur, non accommodant orationes suas ad nostram utilitatem, sed ad suam

take sides in this debate, Piccolomini is content to pass it over in silence, and in the sequel he portrays Bernardino positively. As with hostility to Bernardino in particular, there is no evidence of anticlericalism generally in the text. Nor does the *De viris illustribus* fashion, transmit, report, or reflect arguments against the Church's or the pope's worldly authority. Indeed, Piccolomini praises Traversari's diplomatic work for Eugenius IV at the Council of Basel, which was aimed at nothing less than defending papal supremacy against conciliarism, thus reinforcing the pontiff's place in the political matrix of Europe.⁵⁰ The *De viris illustribus* as a whole takes for granted the Church's involvement in secular politics without rendering moral judgment. This is a far cry from Lorenzo Valla's coeval *Oration on the Donation of Constantine*, in which Valla, perhaps the most prominent humanist of the day to be passed over by Piccolomini, famously railed against the "tyranny of the pope" and urged the supreme pontiff to be the vicar of Christ rather than of Caesar.⁵¹ Ultimately, Piccolomini is aware of the anticlerical and secular nature of some humanist writings, but he neither promotes it nor portrays it as an identifying characteristic of humanism at large. At most he can be thought to illustrate the largely secular framework of early Quattrocento humanism, whose model of rhetorical excellence, Cicero, was a pre-Christian author and whose representatives tended to apply their eloquence to worldly, not religious, concerns (and certainly not to popular preaching).

Equally remote from Piccolomini's view of humanism is any sort of civic orientation or application. This is especially surprising, considering that Leonardo Bruni functions as his exemplary humanist. Ever since the work of Hans Baron, Bruni has been primarily known to scholars as an emblematic "civic humanist," a scholar-statesman who harnessed the love of literature to the cause of patriotism. According to Baron, Bruni elaborated a republican identity for the city of Florence that cemented a civic consciousness at home and warded off tyranny from abroad.⁵² In the view of Eugenio Garin, Bruni "paid special attention to the civic

loquacitatem"). Whether Piccolomini had Poggio's text in mind, or whether both reflect a common opinion, the fact remains that Piccolomini only reports the praise of Bernardino's eloquence.

⁵⁰ For Traversari's work at the Council of Basel, see Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers*, pp. 186–192 (pp. 190–192 for his famous oration in defense of papal supremacy).

⁵¹ See Salvatore I. Camporeale, "Lorenzo Valla e il *De falso credita donatione*. Rhetorica, libertà ed ecclesiologia nel '400," in Camporeale, *Umanesimo, riforma e controriforma*, pp. 463–589, esp. 470 and 574 (translated in *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture*, pp. 17–143, esp. 25 and 129–130).

⁵² Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, esp. pp. 191–269; Leonardo Bruni, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften mit einer Chronologie seiner Werke und Briefe*, ed. Hans Baron (Leipzig, 1928). Cf. Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis.'"

virtues . . . [His] interest is always directed to worldly affairs and to the affairs of his city, for the latter is considered the frame in which virtues are maintained and tried.”⁵³ J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner have subsequently inscribed Bruni into the Renaissance keystone of a republican arch spanning from antiquity to modernity. And James Hankins, while significantly revising the Baron thesis and advising restraint with regard to republicanism, has shown how Bruni used his works to teach civil prudence to the elites at the helm of the ship of state.⁵⁴ It is quite striking, then, that in a work as dedicated to political affairs as the *De viris illustribus* Piccolomini does not record Bruni’s efforts on behalf of his adopted city. Or rather, when he does mention works now understood as representative of Bruni’s civic ethos – the *Laudatio Florentinae urbis* and the *History of the Florentine People* – he adduces them as evidence of Bruni’s stylistic mastery, not of his patriotism or ideology.⁵⁵ For Piccolomini, Bruni is the one who, after nearly a millennium of neglect, restored not classical political thought but classical eloquence. And so much is in accord with Bruni’s contemporary reputation: he was fêted all over Europe as neither ideologue nor advisor but as an historian, translator, and model of Latin style.⁵⁶ Bruni’s hallmark in the *De viris illustribus* is that *scripsit . . . admodum ornate*. Above, this phrase was translated generically as “he wrote very elegantly,” but there is more at stake than the English word “elegance” implies to a modern audience.⁵⁷ To get a sense for the significance of *ornatus*, we can turn to *De oratore* (I, 32, 144), where Cicero explains that elegance, or *ornate loqui*, is one of the four virtues contributing to proper Latin style (*elocutio*), the other three being grammatical correctness, clarity of ideas, words, and

⁵³ Eugenio Garin, *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*, tr. Peter Munz (Oxford, 1965), p. 41 (original Italian version = *L’umanesimo italiano*, p. 52).

⁵⁴ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 2003), esp. pp. 86–91; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), vol. II, esp. pp. 118–159; Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978), esp. pp. 69–189; James Hankins, “Teaching Civil Prudence in Leonardo Bruni’s *History of the Florentine People*,” in S. Ebbesmeyer and E. Kessler (eds.), *Ethik – Wissenschaft oder Lebenskunst? Modelle der Normenbegründung von der Antike bis zur Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2007), pp. 143–157; Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, esp. pp. 1–13 and 143–178.

⁵⁵ Piccolomini adduces these works, which he calls *De laudibus Florentine urbis* and *Gesta Florentinorum*, as evidence of Bruni’s elegant style in *DVI*, pp. 34.23–35.6.

⁵⁶ See James Hankins, “Life and Works,” in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 9–18, esp. 9–11.

⁵⁷ On the place of *ornatus* in Latin rhetoric, see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 2008), §538 and *ad indicem*; and A.D. Leeman, *Oratoris ratio: The Stylistic Theories and Practice of the Roman Orators, Historians, and Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1963), vol. I, pp. 33–42, 124–135, and 299–310. I would like to thank Shane Butler for pointing out to me the centrality and import of *ornatus* in Piccolomini’s text.

syntax, and propriety of tone. Later in the same work (III, 14, 53) he clarifies further that the ability to express oneself *ornate* ranks higher than the other virtues; it is what makes the orator truly great, what makes him considered “a god among men.”⁵⁸

Piccolomini portrays Bruni’s approximation of Ciceronian style, his ability to write *ornate*, as the essence of humanism. Furthermore, it is the defining moment, the *sine qua non* of the past which all those who consider themselves humanists have in common. As such, it is the source of inspiration for their activity, which aims at the linguistic perfection once reached by Cicero but that was still waiting to be reclaimed. For although “with his writing” he “exceeded everyone,” Bruni was only “*most* similar to Cicero” – not simply similar or equal to him. And while “our age” might not have “found his equal,” the master still suffered from some serious defects:

In speaking he was a bit slow and if not forewarned he would not have been able to say anything; therefore when speaking extemporaneously he looked stupid. In poetry he achieved nothing; for although he possessed the art, he lacked natural ability.⁵⁹

The other humanists described by Piccolomini seem in part to serve the function of filling the lacunas in Bruni’s ability. The new generation mentioned at the end – composed of the promising young Marsuppini (who wrote elegant prose *and* poetry) and the Sienese humanists – is meant to represent the continuation of, and perhaps the potential for completing, the humanist project.

To summarize, this project consisted primarily in literary activity, the *studia litterarum*: in writing or speaking in Latin, in translating from Greek, and in composing letters, orations, treatises, dialogues, and the like. Niccoli, as one who creates nothing, might seem to be an exception to the rule. Yet his refined judgment and great erudition make him the “arbiter of knowledge”; that is, he performs the corrective, prescriptive function of the critic. A humanist should also know “both languages”: Latin and Greek. Here Poggio is the exception – Piccolomini apologizes for him – but his superior Latin speech and his vast (Latin) literary output keep him in the club. Most of the individuals mentioned are not said to write poetry, and Bruni is explicitly described as having “achieved nothing” in it. Nevertheless, Beccadelli was known first and foremost as a poet; this

⁵⁸ Cicero, *De oratore*, tr. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1942/1988).

⁵⁹ Piccolomini, *DVI*, p. 36.23–26: “in dicendo tardiusculus erat et nisi premonitus nihil dicere potuisset; ubi namque ex tempore locutus est, quasi amens videbatur. in carmine quoque nihil potuit; nam etsi artem habuit, venam tamen nature non habuit.”

is likely the “reputation” to which Aeneas Sylvius refers. Marsuppini, as Bruni’s successor, writes both poetry and prose elegantly. The central setting for humanism is obviously Florence, although other Italian cities such as Rome, Ferrara, Milan, and Siena share in its glory. Remarkably, little or nothing is said about humanists in Naples or Venice. The humanists work as secretaries, chancellors, ambassadors, or teachers. As seen with reference to Niccolò d’Este and in connection with Bruni’s career, in these occupations patronage could merge with what might otherwise be civic employment. Other humanists live as private citizens, like Niccoli; others still, such as Traversari, Bartolomeo da Montepulciano, and Antonio da Rho, lead the religious life.

* * *

Piccolomini’s view of humanism receives substantial corroboration from one of the foremost historians of the fifteenth century, Biondo Flavio (1392–1463).⁶⁰ While describing the physical and cultural geography of Italy in his *Italia illustrata* (1453),⁶¹ Biondo identifies many of the same

⁶⁰ The foundational study of Biondo remains the introduction in Bartolomeo Nogara, *Scritti inediti e rari di Biondo Flavio* (Rome, 1927), pp. xix–clxxxiii; see also Riccardo Fubini, “Biondo Flavio,” in *DBI*, vol. X, pp. 536–559. For Biondo as an historian, see Denys Hay, “Flavio Biondo and the Middle Ages,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1959), pp. 97–128 [reprinted in Hay, *Renaissance Essays* (London, 1988), pp. 35–66].

⁶¹ I refer to the edition in the I Tatti Renaissance Library: Biondo Flavio, *Italy Illuminated*, ed. and tr. White, hereafter referred to as Biondo, *II*. For the sake of clarity reference will always be made to region and paragraph number, disregarding book number, as some books contain more than one region, and White’s edition begins paragraph numeration anew with each region, not book. All translations are White’s (with modifications noted when made). A complete non-critical edition and translation of *Italia illustrata* with commentary is available: *Biondo Flavio’s Italia Illustrata*, ed. and tr. Castner. As of the submission of my own manuscript, Paolo Pontari has published the first two of three projected volumes of a critical edition of the Latin text (Rome, 2011–). The most helpful treatments I have found of *Italia illustrata*, and the ones on which this paragraph and a good portion of my analysis are based, are Jeffrey A. White, “Introduction” to Biondo, *II*, pp. vii–xxvii; Clavuot, “Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*”; Clavuot, *Biondos Italia illustrata – Summa oder Neuschöpfung? Über die Arbeitsmethoden eines Humanisten* (Tübingen, 1990), esp. pp. 55–137; Rita Cappelletto, “*Italia Illustrata* di Biondo Flavio,” in *Letteratura italiana. Le opere*, vol. I: *Dalle origini al Cinquecento*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin, 1992), pp. 681–712; Paolo Viti, “Umanesimo letterario e primato regionale nell’*Italia illustrata* di F. Biondo,” in Giorgio Varanini and Palmiro Pinagli (eds.), *Studi filologici, letterari e storici: in memoria di Guido Favati* (Padua, 1977), vol. II, pp. 711–732; Nogara, *Scritti inediti*, pp. cxii–cxix, clxvi–clxxi; and Fubini, “Biondo Flavio,” pp. 548–551. Other studies of *Italia illustrata* with a focus similar to mine are Viti, “Umanesimo letterario,” pp. 723–730; Vincenzo Fera, “L’identità dell’Umanesimo,” in Gino Rizzo (ed.), *L’identità nazionale nella cultura letteraria italiana. Atti del terzo Congresso nazionale dell’ADI, Lecce-Otranto 20–22 settembre 1999*, 2 vols. (Lecce, 2001), vol. I, pp. 15–31; and Albanese, “*Mehrsprachigkeit*,” who notes that the importance of Biondo’s account of humanism has neither been widely recognized nor adequately treated (p. 24) – an observation also made by White, “Introduction,” p. xiv, and Fera, “L’identità,” p. 22.

salient characteristics of the humanist movement that emerged in Piccolomini's *De viris illustribus*: its forerunner in Petrarch and founder in Manuel Chrysoloras; its primary object of striving: the eloquent Latin style of Cicero; its medium: translations and original writings, both prose and poetry; other essential aspects: the study of Greek, a love of antiquity, and book collecting; its temporal range: from the late fourteenth century to the present; and its geographical focus: northern and central Italian cities. The only significant disagreement between the two authors pertains to the success of humanism: whereas Piccolomini thinks the climb towards Ciceronian speech is still in progress, Biondo believes the summit has been reached. Two further distinguishing features of Biondo's text strengthen our grasp of the humanists' self-understanding. First, as we might expect from the author of the *Decades* (1439–1452), the first history of late antiquity and medieval Europe, and the *Roma instaurata* (1444–1446) and *Roma triumphans* (1453–1460), works of towering antiquarian erudition, Biondo offers a fuller and more nuanced history of the humanists' revival of classical Latin eloquence; he explains the stages of its development as well as the mechanisms of its diffusion. Second, Biondo endows humanism with a larger cultural significance, portraying it as a cornerstone of modern Italian identity.

Biondo Flavio enjoyed a brilliant career as apostolic secretary in the curia of Eugenius IV (1431–1447) but fell out of favor upon the accession of Nicholas V. In an attempt to regain a source of patronage during this period of effective exile from Rome, he commenced work on the *Italia illustrata*, a project initially promoted by Alfonso the Magnanimous of Aragon, who desired a celebration of the achievements of the great men of the age.⁶² Harnessing encomium to his antiquarian and linguistic interests, Biondo set to work “illustrating” the notable places and people of all eighteen of the classical regions of Italy, which he eventually compressed into fourteen.⁶³ He states the broad aim of *Italia illustrata* in the preface:

to discover if, through the practical experience of the history of Italy I have gained, I shall be able to apply the names of current coinage to the

⁶² Alfonso's desire for a resume of Italy's illustrious men would eventually be satisfied for him by the third work examined in this chapter, Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus*. Biondo dedicated individual portions of the *Italia illustrata* to various potentates, including Alfonso, Prospero Colonna, and Malatesta Novello; the work as a whole bears a dedication to Nicholas V. See Clavuot, “Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*,” p. 65, n. 41.

⁶³ See White, “Introduction,” p. xii (and esp. n. 22), for an overview; a more comprehensive treatment is found in Cappelletto, “*Italia illustrata*,” pp. 692–695. A summary of each region is provided in Johann Clemens Husslein, *Flavio Biondo als Geograph des Frühhumanismus* (Würzburg, 1901).

appropriate places and peoples of Italian antiquity, to settle the authenticity of the new nomenclature, to revive and record the names that have been obliterated, and in a word to bring some light to bear upon the murkiness of Italian history.⁶⁴

But his work goes far beyond the intention announced in this programmatic statement. In a longer, more in-depth description of his undertaking at the beginning of book 1, Biondo notes:

I shall enumerate the pre-eminent men born in former times in her [sc. Italy's] cities and regions severally, as well as those who are living still, *especially those who have distinguished themselves with a reputation for letters or for any great virtue*; and I shall briefly set forth the noteworthy historical events of her individual regions. So this work will be not just a description of Italy, but also *a catalogue of her famous and outstanding men*, as well as a summary of no small part of Italian history.⁶⁵

In the process of compiling this bio-geographico-historical *descriptio*, Biondo pioneered a new genre, chorography. This new text type (based in part on Pomponius Mela's *De situ orbis* and Pausanias), once placed in the rich soil of Tacitus' rediscovered *Germania* and Annius of Viterbo's imaginative *Antiquitates*, would go on to sprout under the lamp of German pride and eventually flourish all over early modern Europe.⁶⁶ Biondo claims to have traversed all of Italy and to have based much of his account on autopsy, but such assertions are somewhat overblown. At least as important as personal experience were boundless reading and the help of numerous

⁶⁴ Biondo, *II*, Pref.3: "... tentare volui an per eam quam sum nactus Italiae rerum peritiam vetustioribus locis eius et populis nominum novitatem, novis auctoritatem, deletis vitam memoriae dare, denique rerum Italiae obscuritatem illustrare potero."

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, i.10: "viros praestantiores qui singulis in urbibus et locis pridem geniti fuerunt, eosque qui sunt superstites, praesertim litterarum aut cuiuspiam virtutis gloria claros, enumerabo; atque res in singulis locis scribi dignas breviter enarrabo, ut non magis haec Italiae sit descriptio quam virorum eius illustrium praestantiumque catalogus ac non parvae partis historiarum Italiae brevium" (emphasis mine).

⁶⁶ Conrad Keltis dreamed of a *Germania illustrata*, and Beatus Rhenanus came as close as anyone to realizing the project in his *Rerum Germanicarum libri tres* (1531). On Biondo's influence and the new genre of chorography, see Johannes Helmuth, "Probleme und Formen nationaler und regionaler Historiographie des deutschen und europäischen Humanismus um 1500," in Matthias Werner (ed.), *Spätmittelalterliches Landesbewusstsein in Deutschland* (Ostfildern, 2005), pp. 333–392 [reprinted in Helmuth, *Wege des Humanismus. Studien zu Praxis und Diffusion der Antikeleidenschaft im 15. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 2013), pp. 213–278]; Ulrich Muhlack, "Das Projekt der *Germania illustrata*. Ein Paradigma der Diffusion des Humanismus?," in Helmuth, Muhlack, and Walther (eds.), *Diffusion des Humanismus*, pp. 142–158; and Albert Schirrmeyer, "Was sind humanistische Landesbeschreibungen? Korpusfragen und Textsorten," in Johannes Helmuth, Albert Schirrmeyer, and Stefan Schlelein (eds.), *Medien und Sprachen humanistischer Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin, 2009), pp. 5–46.

friends and acquaintances.⁶⁷ The *Italia illustrata* is the product of humanist *Großforschung*, with Biondo playing the part of lead researcher and energetic project director. In this role he comes across as an enthusiast for Romano-Italian history and culture, for the grandeur of classical antiquity in all its manifestations, and for the movement of humanism in which he was an active and, in his own opinion, a leading participant.⁶⁸

In the fourth book (comprising the sixth region) of *Italia illustrata*, devoted wholly to his native Romagna, Biondo digresses to include a short but thorough account of the revival of eloquence then underway throughout all of Italy.⁶⁹ In so doing, he offers a brief history of humanism and with it a statement of humanist self-conception and identity.⁷⁰ The digression is occasioned by the mention of Giovanni Malpaghini da Ravenna,⁷¹ one of many illustrious men of the Romagna:

In the last century [Ravenna] . . . bore the learned grammarian and rhetorician Giovanni Malpaghini, who was the first to bring back to Italy the study of eloquence, now so flourishing here after its long exile, as Leonardo Bruni used to say – a most solid and reliable authority on all matters, but specially on this one. It is a subject that certainly merits discussion here in my illustration of Italy.⁷²

⁶⁷ For an example of Biondo's boasting, cf. Biondo, *II*, i.10: "Postquam vero omnem Italiam peragraturus ero . . ." ("After I have ranged over all of Italy . . ."). On the issue of autopsy in Biondo's work, see Rita Cappelletto, "Peragrar ac lustrare Italiam coepi." Alcune considerazioni sull'*Italia illustrata* e sulla sua fortuna," in Anita di Stefano et al. (eds.), *La storiografia umanistica. Convegno internazionale di studi, Messina, 22–25 ottobre 1987*, 2 vols. in 3 (Messina, 1992), pp. 181–203, at 181–189, which also identifies several of Biondo's collaborators in gathering information on Italy, its history, and its geography; Cappelletto, "Italia Illustrata," pp. 684–687; and Catherine J. Castner, "Direct Observation and Biondo Flavio's Additions to *Italia Illustrata*: The Case of Oriculum," *Medievalia et humanistica*, n.s. 25 (1998), pp. 93–108. See also White, "Introduction," p. xi, including n. 20, which provides further bibliography on this point and relates an amusing example of Biondo's duplicity, as well as p. xx for Biondo's collaborators.

⁶⁸ For Biondo's self-estimation as a participant in humanism, cf. the high value he assigns the *Italia illustrata* itself (and his *Roma instaurata*) as a mark of the *renovatio Italiae* in Biondo, *II*, vi.53.

⁶⁹ This digression spans paragraphs 25 to 31 of *regio sexta (Romagna)*, which corresponds to Biondo, *II*, pp. 300–309.

⁷⁰ Cf. Clavuot, *Biondos Italia illustrata – Summa oder Neuschöpfung*, p. 33, who is followed by Fera, "L'identità," pp. 24–25.

⁷¹ The identity of Giovanni da Ravenna here as either Giovanni Malpaghini or Giovanni Conversini, or a confused conflation of the two, is still disputed. I follow the judgment of Jeffrey A. White, the editor and translator of the text for the I Tatti Renaissance Library, and of Witt, *Footsteps*, pp. 339–346. See also Witt, "Still the Matter of the Two Giovanni: A Note on Malpaghini and Conversini," *Rinascimento*, 35 (1996), pp. 179–199. For an argument in favor of Giovanni Conversini, see Albanese, "Mehrsprachigkeit," pp. 29–30. For the view that Biondo conflates the two Giovanni into one mythical persona, see Viti, "Umanesimo letterario," pp. 725–726.

⁷² Biondo, *II*, vi.25: "Genuit quoque superiori saeculo . . . Iohannem grammaticum rhetoremque doctissimum, quem solitus dicere fuit Leonardus Arretinus, omni in re sed potissime in hac una gravissimus locupletissimusque testis, fuisse primum a quo eloquentiae studia – tantopere nunc

A few points in particular should be brought to the fore immediately: (1) Giovanni was the first to bring eloquence back to Italy after a long period of exile; (2) eloquence now flourishes in Biondo's time; (3) the source of this information is Leonardo Bruni.⁷³

Then follows a history of the Latin language that is quite similar to that found in Piccolomini's *De viris illustribus*, although Biondo's is fuller and more detailed:

Those who have developed a sure and true taste for Latin literature realize and appreciate that few authors, indeed hardly any, wrote Latin with any measure of elegance after the time of the doctors of the Church, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine – the very period of the decline of the Roman empire – unless we are to include in their numbers St. Gregory and the Venerable Bede, who came just afterwards, and St. Bernard, who was much later.⁷⁴

More attentive to historical reasoning than Aeneas Sylvius, Biondo connects the decline of eloquence with that of the Roman empire. He is also a bit more tolerant in setting the confines of proper Latin, willing to consider not only Gregory the Great but also Bede and even St. Bernard, a clerical writer of the twelfth century, as exemplars of good style.

Both authors, however, agree in considering the Middle Ages a period essentially without eloquence, as well as in identifying the roots of humanism's revival of eloquence in Petrarch:

The very first to rouse Latin poetry and eloquence was Francesco Petrarca, a man of great talent and even greater industry, even if he never attained the full flower of Ciceronian eloquence that we see gracing so many men of our own time.⁷⁵

From the age of Augustine to Petrarch, only three authors were worth noting for their eloquence (two more than in Piccolomini, it might be

florentia longe postliminio – in Italiam fuerint reducta: digna certe cognitio quae a nobis nunc illustranda Italia in medium adducatur.”

⁷³ Fera, “L’identità,” p. 24, doubts that Bruni is truly a source for this view as Biondo presents it; instead he believes Biondo is vying with Bruni’s own view of Florence’s importance as explained in the *Funeral Oration for Nanni Strozzi* and the *Memoirs* (pp. 22–23).

⁷⁴ Biondo, *II*, vi.26: “Vident atque intellegunt qui Latinas litteras vero et suo cum sapore degustant, paucos ac prope nullos post doctorum ecclesiae Ambrosii, Hieronymi et Augustini <tempora>, quae et eadem inclinantis Romanorum imperii tempora fuerunt, aliqua cum elegantia scripsisse, nisi illis propinqui temporibus beatus Gregorius ac venerabilis Beda et, qui longo his posterior tempore fuit, beatus Bernardus in eorum numerum sint ponendi.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vi.26: “Primus vero omnium Franciscus Petrarcha, magno vir ingenio maiorique diligentia, et poesim et eloquentiam excitare coepit. Nec tamen eum attigit Ciceronianae eloquentiae florem quo multos in hoc saeculo videmus ornatos” (White’s translation slightly modified).

noted). The project, and the achievement, of humanism was to revive eloquence and to spread it far and wide. In a noteworthy contrast to Aeneas Sylvius, Biondo is confident that “Ciceronian eloquence” graces “so many men of our own time.” Piccolomini’s most eloquent humanist was Bruni, who was only “*most similar to Cicero.*”

Whether the stylistic *Geist* of Cicero was speaking through the mouths of Biondo’s contemporaries or not, it is certain that Petrarch did not have the spirit. In Piccolomini’s eyes he had given Latin “a little lustre.” Here he fares a mite better, but only thanks to an exculpatory explanation: “we do not criticize in him want or defect of natural ability so much as lack of books.”⁷⁶ This passage is reminiscent of Leonardo Bruni’s *Dialogues*, in which the protagonist Niccolò Niccoli (Piccolomini’s “abusive” “arbiter of knowledge”) bemoans the very possibility of having a Renaissance on account of this same deficiency. Niccoli’s complaint is likely insincere, yet it is not contradicted in the *Dialogues*, and the reader is left with a sense of doubt about humanism’s possibility.⁷⁷ Biondo Flavio, however, has no misgivings. Writing half a century after Bruni, humanism and the Renaissance are for him established facts. How did they manage to overcome this challenge, one that could be summed up in a single word: ignorance?

Aeneas Sylvius goes straight to Manuel Chrysoloras for the explanation, but Biondo stops to emphasize the importance of the Latin schoolmaster who occasioned his digression in the first place, Giovanni da Ravenna:

Giovanni Malpaghini as a boy knew Petrarch in his old age, and saw those books no more than Petrarch did, nor did he leave anything in writing. And yet by dint of his natural talent and (as Leonardo [Bruni] used to say) the grace of God, . . . he managed to kindle in his students a passion for “good letters” (as he put it) and for the imitation of Cicero, even if he was unable to teach subjects he was entirely ignorant of.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid., vi.26: “in quo quidem nos librorum magis quam ingenii carentiam defectumque culpamus.”

⁷⁷ Leonardo Bruni, *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, ed. Stefano U. Baldassarri (Florence, 1994). For the interpretation of Bruni’s *Dialogues*, see David Quint, “Humanism and Modernity: A Reconsideration of Bruni’s *Dialogues*,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), pp. 423–445. Bruni would later express greater optimism about humanism in his *Vita del Petrarca*, based on the success for which he himself was largely responsible; see James Hankins, “Humanism in the Vernacular: The Case of Leonardo Bruni,” in Celenza and Gouwens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity*, pp. 11–29, at 14; Hankins, “Petrarch and the Canon”; and for a slightly different view, see D’Ascia, “Coscienza della Rinascita,” pp. 3–7.

⁷⁸ Biondo, *II*, vi.27: “Iohannes autem Ravennas Petrarcham senem puer novit nec eos aliter quam Petrarcha vidit libros neque quod sciamus aliquid a se scriptum reliquit. Et tamen suoapte ingenio et quodam dei munere, sicut fuit solitus dicere Leonardus, . . . auditores suos, si non satis quod plene nesciebat docere potuit, in bonarum ut dicebat litterarum amorem Ciceronisque imitationem

Biondo names as his students Pier Paolo Vergerio, Ognibene Scola, Roberto de' Rossi, Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, Poggio Bracciolini, Guarino Veronese, and Vittorino da Feltre – many of the most important humanists of the early fifteenth century.⁷⁹

But the Latin *magister* did not suffice:

At the same time, Manuel Chrysoloras of Constantinople came to Italy, a man pre-eminent in scholarship and all the virtues; he taught Greek to nearly all those students of Giovanni Malpaghini, in Venice, in Florence and in the Roman Curia, with which he was associated. His teaching lasted only a few years, but it had the effect that those who did not know Greek appeared ignorant in Latin.⁸⁰

Like Piccolomini, Biondo puts Chrysoloras at the moment of humanism's definitive take-off, at the kernel of its identity. Yet he does more. Whereas Aeneas Sylvius had simply asserted the humanists' debt to Chrysoloras, saying that the Byzantine "reintroduced the ancient method and Ciceronian style of writing," Biondo explains how this actually happened:

The arrival of Greek letters was no small help in the acquisition of eloquence; and it was actually a stimulus to doing so, because, quite apart from the sheer knowledge and the huge supply of historical and moral material they gained from it, those who knew Greek attempted a good many translations into Latin, and so by constant practice in composition, their skill in writing improved, if they had any to begin with; or if they hadn't, they acquired some.⁸¹

Biondo's explanation is clear: the practice of translation provided the bridge from Greek to Latin eloquence.⁸²

inflammabat." Fera, "L'identità," p. 24, believes that Biondo's Giovanni is a "mistificazione ideologica," an ideal composite of Giovanni Conversini and Giovanni Malpaghini meant to embody an "idealizzata figura di un mitico savio, un Socrate romagnolo."

⁷⁹ Biondo, *II*, vi.27.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, vi.27: "Interea Emanuel Chrysoloras Constantinopolitanus, vir doctrina et omni virtute excellentissimus, cum se in Italiam contulisset, partim Venetiis, partim Florentiae, partim in Romana curia quam secutus est, praedictos paene omnes Iohannis Ravennatis auditores litteras docuit Graecas; effectique eius doctrina paucis tamen continuata annis ut qui Graecas nescirent litteras, Latinas minus viderentur edocti."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, vi.30: "Nec parvum fuit cum adiumentum ad discendum eloquentiam tum etiam incitamentum Graecarum accessio litterarum, quod, qui eas didicere – praeter doctrinam et ingentem historiarum exemplorumque copiam inde comparatam – conati sunt multa ex Graecis in Latinitatem vertere, in quo usu aut assiduitate scribendi, aut reddiderunt eam quam habebant eloquentiam meliorem aut qui nullam prius habuerant inde aliquam compararunt." This passage exhibits some interesting similarities with Cicero, *De oratore*, I, 4.

⁸² Cf. Witt, *Footsteps*, pp. 342–343. See also Chapter 3 below, pp. 144–146.

At this point one thing was still lacking for the full rebirth of ancient eloquence: books, especially those containing the eloquent works of the ancients; Biondo stresses particularly the writings of Cicero and Quintilian. In his view, the search for “the lost books of the Romans and old Italy”⁸³ began with the Council of Constance, which occasioned the ransacking of Swiss and German monasteries. Among the earliest discoveries he records were the first complete manuscript of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* and Cicero’s *Letters to Atticus*, shortly followed (in Lodi) by Cicero’s treatises on the art of rhetoric *De oratore*, *Brutus*, and *Orator*. Biondo singles out especially Poggio Bracciolini and the humanist schoolmaster Gasparino Barzizza for their praiseworthy efforts to find, safeguard, transcribe, and proliferate these texts. He also mentions his own small role in their transmission.⁸⁴

Now, armed with the right literature, a special unit of humanist teachers brought eloquence to every part of Italy. “The famous grammarian and rhetorician Gasparino Barzizza instructed a number” of students in Padua, Venice, and Milan “with his uncommonly good teaching, and roused many more to follow his example in these studies.”⁸⁵ Giovanni Malpaghini’s influence is also to be seen here:

Two of [his] pupils . . . , Guarino and Vittorino, have educated a whole host of students almost without number, the former at Venice, Verona, Florence, and finally Ferrara, the latter at Mantua, and among their pupils were the princes of Ferrara and Mantua.⁸⁶

Chrysoloras, too, plays a role: “Francesco Filelfo, himself educated by Chrysoloras’ own progeny at Constantinople, has taught a great many people Greek and Latin letters in Venice, Florence, Siena, Bologna, and finally at Milan.”⁸⁷ Then several other teachers are mentioned by name,

⁸³ Biondo, *II*, vi.28: “. . . ex deperditis Romanorum et Italiae olim libris.”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, vi.29. For the history of the recovery of classical texts wholly or partially lost in the Middle Ages, see Remigio Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne’ secoli XIV e XV*. Edizione anastatica con nuove aggiunte e correzioni dell’autore a cura di Eugenio Garin (Florence, 1967); and L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1991), pp. 113–163.

⁸⁵ Biondo, *II*, vi.28: “Gasparinus Bergomensis, grammaticus rhetorque celeberrimus, . . . meliori solito doctrina nonnullos erudit, plurimos ad ea imitanda studia incitavit.”

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, vi.31: “Ex his autem quos Iohanni nostro Ravennati diximus fuisse discipulos . . . Guarinus et Victorinus, hic Mantuae, ille Venetiis, Veronae, Florentiae et demum Ferrariae, infinitam paene turbam, et in his Ferrarienses Mantuanosque principes, erudierunt.”

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vi.31: “Franciscus vero Philephus ab ipsa gente Chrysolora Constantinopoli eruditus Venetiis, Florentiae, Senis, Bononiae et demum Mediolani plurimos Graecas litteras docuit et Latinas.” For the poet, teacher, and notoriously fickle Filelfo, see Diana Robin, *Filelfo in Milan: Writings, 1451–1477* (Princeton, 1991); and Paolo Viti, “Filelfo, Francesco,” in *DBI*, vol. XLVII (1997), pp. 613–626.

including George of Trebizond, who instructed Italians and foreigners in Rome, and Lorenzo Valla, who educated all of Italy with his *Elegantiae*.⁸⁸

In a few strokes, Biondo clearly outlines the steps that ensured humanism's success, the mechanisms that turned it from a minor curiosity into a widespread movement for the re-establishment of eloquence. It began with a few dedicated individuals, the visionary Petrarch and early teachers like Giovanni Malpighini and Chrysoloras. Subsequently, the recovery of the right books was the essential factor in transforming their zeal into a sustained movement:

We can see that the benefit brought to our countrymen by so many books – the tinder of eloquence itself – resulted in our age having richer and finer resources at its disposal than Petrarch enjoyed.⁸⁹

Add in the study of Greek, which gave the early humanists practice in composition through translation, and eloquence was bound to put down firm roots:

And so academies all over Italy have long been hives of activity, and they are more and more active now with each passing day. The schools are generally in the cities, where it is a fine and pleasant spectacle to see pupils surpassing their teachers in the polish of their speech or writing, and not just after their education is complete but even while they are actually declaiming and composing under the teacher's very rod.⁹⁰

Finally, good teachers are the captains of the movement: as an army, they “are striving might and main to fill Italy with good letters” (*bonae litterae*).⁹¹

If Biondo is optimistic about the success of this revival, poetry would nevertheless seem to be lagging behind somewhat. Indeed, poetry is mentioned explicitly only twice in his account of humanism: in the impetus Petrarch gave to the revival of “Latin poetry and eloquence,” and in the “courses on rhetoric and poetry” George of Trebizond is said to have offered

⁸⁸ Biondo, *II*, vi.31. For the Byzantine émigré George of Trebizond, see John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden, 1976); for Valla, most famous today for his attack on the Donation of Constantine, see Maristella Lorch, “Italy's Leading Humanist: Lorenzo Valla,” in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. I, pp. 332–349.

⁸⁹ Biondo, *II*, vi.30: “Quo ex tot librorum, ipsius eloquentiae fomitum, allato nostris hominibus adiumento factum videmus ut maior meliorque ea quam Petrarcha habuit dicendi copia in nostram pervenerit aetatem.”

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vi.30: “Hinc ferbuerunt diu magisque nunc ac magis fervent per Italiam gymnasia. Plerique sunt in civitatibus ludi, in quibus pulcherrimum iucundumque est videre discipulos, non solum postquam sunt dimissi, sed quousque etiam sub ipsa ferula declamant et scribunt, praeceptores dicendi scribendive elegantia superare” (translation altered).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, vi.31: “. . . Italiam bonis litteris implere pro viribus enituntur.”

in Rome.⁹² Clearly Biondo has mainly prose in mind when speaking of Latin eloquence. Nevertheless, poets are named throughout *Italia illustrata*. And one of them, Giovanni Pontano, the versatile humanist who would achieve fame in Naples, even gave Biondo cause to be sanguine about the revival of classical verse. In an excursus on the Pontano family, from the Umbrian town of Ponte di Cerreto, he writes:

Gioviano of the same Pontano family, a young man of great natural ability, is now coming into his own: utterly dedicated as he is to the writing of iambic and elegiac verse, he seems destined to match the glory of his countrymen Propertius and Callimachus, or of Ovid, whom he resembles, or of Catullus of Verona, his chief model.⁹³

Still, unlike prose, which supposedly had already attained to ancient standards of excellence, poetry is merely “destined” to do so in the figure of Pontano. As in Piccolomini’s work, here, too, poetry is running second in humanism’s race. Having fallen behind when attention was turned to imitating Cicero, only now, at mid-century, is it catching up.

Accustomed as we are to thinking of humanism as only one (small) part of a larger artistic renaissance, we would expect Biondo to place the humanists’ achievement in that broader cultural context. And so he does, in a way. In a preface addressed to the humanist Pope Nicholas V, Biondo characterized his time as one divinely blessed with a new flourishing of culture. It is a time in which, “God being more gracious to us now, . . . the cultivation of the rest of the arts and of eloquence, especially, has come alive again.”⁹⁴ The evidence for this Golden Age consists in the approximately

⁹² For Petrarch, see note 75 above; for George of Trebizond, cf. *ibid.*, vi.31: “At the University of Rome, George of Trebizond has alongside Italian students many Spaniards, French, and Germans, some of them important and distinguished men, for his courses on rhetoric and poetry” (“Georgius Trapezuntius publico Romae gymnasio Hispanos, Gallos Germanosque multos, in quis nonnulli aliquando sunt magni praestantesque viri, simul cum Italicis oratoriae ac poeticae auditores habet”).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, iv.11: “Magne etiam indolis praedictae succrescit Pontanae gentis adulescens Jovianus, qui iambico versu et scribendis elegiis assiduo deditus studio Propertii et Callimachi contribulium, aut vicini Ovidii, aut quem magis imitatur, Catulli Veronensis, laudibus responsurus videtur.” For Pontano and his poetry, see Carol Kidwell, *Pontano: Poet and Prime Minister* (London, 1991); Rodney G. Dennis, “Introduction,” in Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, *Baiae*, tr. R.G. Dennis (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), pp. vii–xxiv; and Julia Haig Gaisser, *Catullus and His Renaissance Readers* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 220–229.

⁹⁴ Biondo, *II*, Pref.3: “. . . propitiore nobis deo nostro meliora habet aetas nostra, et cum ceterarum artium tum maxime eloquentiae studia revixerunt . . .” Biondo eventually discarded this preface and any mention of Nicholas V, as the pope did not patronize him as well as his predecessor (Eugenius IV) had and actually dismissed him from the curia, ending his involvement in papal politics. See White, “Introduction,” pp. xx–xxi; and Hay, “Flavio Biondo and the Middle Ages,” pp. 100–101.

four hundred individuals whose achievements *Italia illustrata* describes, not all of whom belong to the arts. Military and political figures, for example, enjoy a certain prominence. One of the most celebrated is the *condottiere* Alberigo da Barbiano, the leader of the Compagnia di San Giorgio, to whom Biondo ascribes the revival of Italian military valor.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, such individuals are greatly outnumbered by men of learning, who constitute about sixty percent of the approximately four hundred persons treated.⁹⁶ Of these the vast majority are humanists – those participating in the God-granted revival of eloquence – while jurists make up the second-largest bloc. Twenty-five percent of all the individuals named by Biondo are ecclesiastics, and the smallest group of meaningful size is that of princes, leading citizens, and military men.⁹⁷ The point of naming all of these great individuals and describing their accomplishments, as Ottavio Clavuot has explained, is “to show why Italy, despite its political fragmentation, ought to be considered a unit and what meaning it has in the context of world history.”⁹⁸ Geography is only one aspect of Italy’s coherence, others being its Roman past, the rediscovery of its archaeological and linguistic

⁹⁵ Clavuot, “Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*,” pp. 62–64. Cf. Biondo, *II*, vi.40–53. It should be noted that Biondo’s enthusiasm for how Alberigo da Barbiano “changed the face of warfare in Italy” (vi.40: “qui maximam in re militari Italica fecit mutationem”) builds up to a rather weak crescendo. After claiming “that the expulsion of foreign soldiers from Italy . . . was of such importance that her wealth increased and she had greater peace – certainly a more secure peace – ever afterwards,” Biondo must then concede: “It is true that in the wars that have been waged after the foreigners were thrown out, the pillaging of towns and cities does take place, but our people commonly restrain themselves from wholesale destruction, burning, and murdering. And what is lost as plunder to one Italian piles up as wealth for another, which the barbarous foreigner would have made off with” (vi.50: “nostra fert opinio tanti fuisse externos milites . . . Italia pulsos esse ut postea et opibus magis abundaverit et maiorem, certe tutiorem quietam [postea] semper habuerit. Nam etsi in bellis quae post eam externorum eiectionem sunt gesta urbium oppidorumque direptiones committuntur, ab excidio tamen incendio et sanguine nostri saepius temperant et quod uni in expilatione damno est opes alteri Italico accumulatur – quas externus barbarusque asportasset”). This changed state of affairs no doubt offered some consolation, but it must have been cold comfort for one, like Biondo, who longed for lasting peace and unity.

⁹⁶ All of the information on the relative prominence of different cultural, religious, political, and military groups comes from Clavuot, “Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*,” pp. 65–70.

⁹⁷ Obviously, some of these groups intersect, such as humanists and ecclesiastics (a common enough combination), but others rarely do, such as humanists and political or military leaders. Biondo’s focus is clearly on men of learning, not men of action.

⁹⁸ Clavuot, “Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*,” p. 57: “hat Biondo in der *Italia illustrata* darzustellen versucht, weshalb Italien trotz politischer Zersplitterung als Einheit zu begreifen sei und welche Bedeutung es für die Weltgeschichte habe.” This view contrasts with, and is to my mind superior to, that of Denys Hay, “The Italian View of Renaissance Italy,” in J.G. Rowe and W.H. Stockdale (eds.), *Florilegium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 3–17, esp. 7 [reprinted in Hay, *Renaissance Essays*, pp. 375–388], who describes Biondo’s conception of Italy and his purpose in *Italia illustrata* as purely geographical and antiquarian.

heritage, and the hope for its political and military independence from the rest of Europe. The most important, however, is the cultural and political Renaissance of the time.⁹⁹

With this focus on culture, and considering Biondo's programmatic statement about "the rest of the arts," it is surprising that he pays comparatively little attention to the renaissance of the *belle arti*. Indeed, he almost entirely ignores it, naming only six artists and two musicians.¹⁰⁰ It is instead men of learning, especially humanists, who give Italy its coherence and meaning as a valid cultural and possibly a political unit. Even political and military actors pale in comparison, for their putative efforts to unite Italy ultimately prove illusory, effectively useful only as a myth. Humanism, on the other hand, provides modern Italians with a concrete, modern identity.¹⁰¹ In the words of Jeffrey White, "Humanism makes the reintegration of classical past and Italian present possible."¹⁰²

A relationship between humanism and modern identity has been familiar to scholars ever since Burckhardt declared Renaissance Italians to be the "firstborn among the sons of modern Europe."¹⁰³ Burckhardt connected modernity with the sense of individuality that he postulated had developed out of the peculiar political character of the medieval city-states. It could be seen emblematically, he argued, in the *allseitig* Leon Battista Alberti as well as in the celebrity achieved by the humanists. For Eugenio Garin, the new sense of man that developed within humanism manifested itself in a proper philosophy of life, an outlook that would determine Italian character and thought for centuries to come. As he summarized in the epilogue to his *Umanesimo italiano*,

If it is true that humanism consisted in a renewed confidence in man and his possibilities and in an appreciation of man's activity in every possible sense, it is only fair to give Humanism credit for the new methods of scientific investigation, the renewed vision of the world and the new attitude towards objects with a view to using them and to dominating them. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the civilization of Italy, in spite of oscillations and contrasts, witnessed the emergence of a fully fashioned idea of man. This

⁹⁹ Clavuo, "Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*," pp. 57, 64–76.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 65 (and n. 43) and 70 (and nn. 75–78). Furthermore, Biondo gives no synthetic account of the history of the revival of the arts (p. 61), whereas he does for humanism (see below).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 61–75. See also Fera, "L'identità," pp. 26–29. Cf. note 98 above.

¹⁰² White, "Introduction," p. xiii.

¹⁰³ Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, p. 93. The famous quotation is found in the introduction to the second part of *Civilization*, "The Development of the Individual," and is adduced by Robert Black, "Humanism," p. 246, in a discussion (pp. 245–246) that in large part informs this paragraph.

idea was made possible by the *studia humanitatis* and by an active expansion in the world.¹⁰⁴

Biondo casts the relationship between humanism and Italian identity differently. He does not posit in humanism a fresh understanding of man's nature or predict that it will lead to liberating epistemes and mentalities; rather he implies that the common identity available in humanist culture has the potential to unite Italians at a crucial, felicitous moment of changing political fortunes.¹⁰⁵ After lamenting Italy's medieval history of invasion at the hands of German emperors and the long omnipresence of foreign mercenaries across the peninsula, he rejoices at the expulsion of English, Breton, and German troops and the attendant increase in peace, security, and prosperity the Italians of his time enjoy. Homegrown *condottieri* have renewed ancient Italian arms, the humanists have revived ancient eloquence, and now he himself has restored knowledge of Italian history with his works. The stage is set, he all but shouts, for a *renovatio Italiae*. Humanism has (or Biondo hopes it will have) political consequences. By uniting Italians with a common culture, one, moreover, that takes its bearings from the ancient greatness of the Roman empire – whose hallmarks are eloquence and military might and which represents the last point in time in which Italians were confederated under one power – humanism has the potential to cement the autonomy of the peninsula.

To summarize Biondo's view, humanism is synonymous with the revival of eloquence and good letters, *bonae litterae*, and it is the result of: (1) three key founders: Petrarch, Giovanni Malpaghini da Ravenna, and Manuel Chrysoloras; (2) the recovery of the "lost books of the Romans and old Italy" (especially Quintilian and Cicero's rhetorical works), which are "the tinder of eloquence itself"; (3) the introduction of Greek, "no small help in the acquisition of eloquence"; and (4) an army of "grammarians and rhetoricians" who are "striving might and main to fill Italy with good letters." Biondo gives a much more detailed and incisive account than Piccolomini, but ultimately he is in accord with the latter, who described humanism as the effort to revive "the ancient method and Ciceronian style of writing." The two authors also agree on the central role played by Chrysoloras, and both hold Leonardo Bruni in the highest esteem. For Biondo he is also a personal friend (and sparring partner) and is the most

¹⁰⁴ In the translation of Peter Munz: *Italian Humanism*, p. 221 [original Italian version in Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, p. 252].

¹⁰⁵ Biondo, *II*, vi.41–53.

reliable witness to the development of the movement.¹⁰⁶ The two authors part ways only with regard to the completion of humanism's central goal and its larger cultural importance. For Piccolomini, ancient, Ciceronian eloquence has not yet become common, and the group of people devoted to it constitutes only one brick in the cultural edifice of Italy and the rest of Europe. In Biondo Flavio's *Italia illustrata*, however, "the full flower of Ciceronian eloquence" can be seen "gracing so many men of our own time," and it is this eloquence that makes Italy whole.

* * *

Having heard from two of the leading humanists of the fifteenth century, we now turn to a less influential figure, Bartolomeo Facio (1400–1457).¹⁰⁷ Of the authors whose texts are considered in this book, he brings us closest to the point of view of the humanist everyman, that of a follower rather than a trailblazer, a participant in rather than a shaper of the movement. Despite this difference in status, his *De viris illustribus* (1456) depicts humanism in essentially the same way as the first two authors did, namely as a project to restore ancient Latin eloquence.¹⁰⁸ This shared conception doubtless

¹⁰⁶ Bruni appears as an authority throughout. For a complete list of passages cf. the index in Biondo, *II*, p. 453.

¹⁰⁷ On Facio, see Paolo Viti, "Facio, Bartolomeo," in *DBI*, vol. XLIV (1994), pp. 113–121; and Gabriella Albanese (ed.), *Studi su Bartolomeo Facio* (Pisa, 2000). For an introduction in English, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Humanist Bartolomeo Facio and His Unknown Correspondence," in Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, vol. II, pp. 265–280, 507–529, at 275–276 [reprinted with additional appendices from its earlier appearance in C.H. Carter (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly* (New York, 1965), pp. 56–74]; Ennio I. Rao, "Preface," in Bartolomeo Facio, *Invective in Laurentium Vallam* (Naples, 1978), pp. 7–42; and the brief overview in Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 100–108. See also Ubaldo Mazzini, "Appunti e notizie per servire alla bio-bibliografia di Bartolomeo Facio," *Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria*, 4 (1903), pp. 400–454; and Claudio Marchiori, *Bartolomeo Facio tra letteratura e vita* (Milan, 1971), although cf. the criticisms of Marchiori's work as derivative in Bentley, *Politics and Culture*, p. 101, n. 42 and as unreliable in Albanese (ed.), *Studi su Bartolomeo Facio*, pp. 2, n. 2 and 47, n. 4. Further bibliography in Viti, "Facio, Bartolomeo," pp. 119–121.

¹⁰⁸ This work has no modern edition; all references are to Bartolomeo Facio, *De viris illustribus liber*, ed. Laurentius Mehus (Florentiae: Ex typ. Joannis Pauli Giovannelli, 1745), which I have consulted in the facsimile reprint available in Di Stefano et al. (eds.), *La storiografia umanistica*, vol. II, pp. 11–164, hereafter referred to as Facio, *DVI*. References are to Mehus' original page numbers; all translations are my own. More correct versions of portions of the text, based on manuscript witnesses, have been provided by Baxandall, "Bartholomeus Facius on Painting," pp. 90–97, later integrated into Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, pp. 97–111; and Gabriella Albanese, "Le sezioni *De pictoribus* e *De sculptoribus* nel *De viris illustribus* di Bartolomeo Facio," in Gabriella Albanese and Paolo Pontari, "*De pictoribus atque sculptoribus qui hac aetate nostra claruerunt*." Alle origini della biografia artistica rinascimentale: gli storici dell'umanesimo," *Letteratura e Arte* 1 (2003), 59–110, at 65–79. For the dating and a list of the known manuscripts of *DVI*, see Mariarosaria Cortesi, "Il codice Vaticano lat. 13650 e il *De viris illustribus* di Bartolomeo Facio," *Italia medioevale*

owes something to the fact that all three men worked for years as secretaries to princes temporal or spiritual, in which role they performed many of the same characteristically humanist tasks, such as overseeing official correspondence and writing works of literature that smacked of antiquity. Yet there were also important geographical, social, and biographical differences among them that make their agreement all the more remarkable. The Sienese nobleman Aeneas Sylvius, having spent about two decades in and (mostly) out of Italy, composed his *De viris illustribus* as a bishop. Biondo Flavio of Forlì, once a power player in papal politics, wrote the *Italia illustrata* as an ex-curialist in fear of poverty. And Facio, a Ligurian transplant in Naples, was handsomely rewarded for his own *De viris illustribus* by one of the most powerful patrons of the day, Alfonso the Magnanimous. The fact that Facio's work was commissioned accounts in part for several peculiarities in his point of view. Of all three authors he is the most vocal about patronage, and he is alone in praising the virtue of humanists as well as that of those who supported them. Furthermore, he is much stricter about policing the internal and external boundaries of humanism. On the one hand he divides his fellows into discreet groups based on their literary production. On the other he explicitly sets them apart from, and above, other cultural figures like jurists, physicians, and philosophers. Finally, he portrays humanism as a truly great human endeavor, on par with, if not superior to, artistic production, military valor, and the exercise of political power.

A native of La Spezia and a student of Guarino, Facio was described by Kristeller as "a significant, if not an important figure" in Italian humanism.¹⁰⁹ In his younger years he was a teacher to the children of Francesco Foscari, doge of Venice, and a functionary of the republic of Genoa before finding his place in the Aragonese court of Alfonso the Magnanimous in Naples (1444–1457). There he came into contact with Lorenzo Valla, and the polemical exchange between the two has secured for Facio whatever amount of fame he still enjoys.¹¹⁰ In his day, however,

e umanistica, 31 (1988), pp. 409–418, at 411–413. See also Aulo Greco, "Forme di letteratura e di vita nel *De viris illustribus* di B. Facio," in Greco, *La memoria delle lettere* (Rome, 1985), pp. 26–43. On Facio's works and their relationship to his patron in Naples, see Gabriella Albanese, "Lo scriptorio di Facio e lo *scriptorium* di corte," in Albanese (ed.), *Studi su Bartolomeo Facio*, pp. 1–32.

¹⁰⁹ Kristeller, "The Humanist Bartolomeo Facio," p. 266.

¹¹⁰ The debate between the two, over the Latinity and *dignitas* of Valla's *Gesta Ferdinandi regis*, was sparked in 1446 and ultimately consumed all of Italy, dividing the ranks of humanists into pro- and anti-Valla camps. Cf. Facio, *Invective in Laurentium Vallam*; and Lorenzo Valla, *Antidotum in Facium*, ed. Mariangela Regoliosi (Padua, 1981). A short description is also available in Ennio I. Rao, *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon: 101 Years of Invective (1352–1453)* (Messina, 2007), pp. 83–85.

he was a respected friend and correspondent of leading humanists like Antonio Beccadelli, Poggio Bracciolini, and Biondo Flavio. Furthermore, he undertook, with the help of the Byzantine émigrés Theodore Gaza and Niccolò Sagundino, to revise Pier Paolo Vergerio's rudimentary translation of Arrian's *Anabasis* (of which he only finished a quarter before his death), and he was known for several original works of history. In most endeavors his chief object was the celebration of his benefactor, Alfonso, and it was partly to this end as well that he composed his *De viris illustribus*.

Like Biondo's *Italia illustrata*, Facio's *De viris illustribus* includes great men from all departments of culture and politics and from all over Italy, occasionally (unlike Biondo) even ranging afield to the rest of Europe. Facio treats fewer figures, but his biographies are on the whole much more detailed. In contrast to Aeneas Sylvius he lacks a true European vision, but he gives much more attention than the Sienese humanist to individuals and their achievements outside the realm of politics. Facio divides his *De viris illustribus* into nine distinct categories: poets, orators, jurisconsults, doctors (including physicians, philosophers, and theologians), painters, sculptors, great private citizens, *condottieri*, and kings and princes; each receives its own section introduced by a programmatic preface. The first two groups – poets (six biographies) and orators (thirty-five biographies) – represent the world of humanism and make up half of the total work.¹¹¹

The significance of Facio's *De viris illustribus* has generally been ignored.¹¹² The work was dismissed by Eric Cochrane in his *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*. Even Kristeller overlooked its importance despite defending it against unnamed detractors by whom it

¹¹¹ The humanists recorded by Facio are (in the following order): *poetae*: Antonio Loschi, Antonio Beccadelli, Francesco Filelfo, Giovanni Marrasio, Tito Strozzi, Giovanni Pontano; *oratores*: Manuel Chrysoloras, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, Leonardo Bruni, Ambrogio Traversari, Niccolò Niccoli, Carlo Marsuppini, Leonardo Giustinian, Leon Battista Alberti, Vittorino da Feltre, Niccolò Perotti, Guiniforte Barzizza, Leodrisio Crivelli, Francesco Griffolini, Francesco Barbaro, Antonio Cassarino, Poggio Bracciolini, Gaurino Veronese, Giovanni Aurispa, Giannozzo Manetti, Jacopo Bracelli, Basilios Bessarion, George of Trebizond, Niccolò Sagundino, Girolamo da Castello (a.k.a. Girolamo Castelli), Lampo Birago, Lorenzo Valla, Pier Candido Decembrio, Timoteo Maffei (a.k.a. Timothy of Verona), Giovanni Tortelli, Gregorio Tifernate, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Jacopo da San Cassiano (a.k.a. Jacopo of Cremona), Theodore Gaza, Gasparino Barzizza. For comments on the structure of *DVI*, see Gabriella Albanese, "Lo spazio della gloria. Il *condottiero* nel *De viris illustribus* di Facio e nella trattatistica dell'umanesimo," in Albanese (ed.), *Studi su Bartolomeo Facio*, pp. 215–255, at 231ff.

¹¹² Its biographies of artists are considered in Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, pp. 97–111; and Albanese, "Le sezioni *De pictoribus*"; its treatment of *condottieri* in Albanese, "Lo spazio della gloria." Albanese has done more than anyone to give Facio his due, both throughout *Studi su Bartolomeo Facio* and (with Paolo Pontari) in "*De pictoribus atque sculptoribus*." See also Cortesi, "Il codice Vaticano," pp. 409–411, 418, who highlights the significance of Facio's biography of Valla both for their personal relationship and for questions of *DVI*'s authorship.

had “been criticized for the brevity of its presentation,” saying only generically that “the work reflects the range of human achievements that seemed important to the author and his time.”¹¹³ Clearly, the human achievement Facio considered most important was humanism, and it is as a contemporary witness to its character and meaning that his *De viris illustribus* deserves our attention. Unlike Piccolomini and Biondo, however, Facio offers neither a narrative history nor a discrete description of humanism, nor does he endeavor explicitly to explain the causes and mechanisms of the movement’s growth and evolution. Rather, he provides a series of bio-bibliographical entries in the manner of Jerome’s *De viris illustribus*, i.e., a series of *vitae* devoted more to cataloguing individuals’ writings than to chronicling their lives’ other accomplishments. Yet this does not make Facio’s work a mere list. On the contrary, it does the same thing for humanism that Jerome did for Christianity: it depicts the landscape of an intellectual and literary culture by means of a combined monument to individual authors. Thus Facio’s vision of humanism remains a gestalt, but it can be broken down by means of a close reading of the various biographies and a collation of the common characteristics that bind the various individuals together as a group, as well as by paying heed to programmatic statements in the various section prefaces, where Facio gives voice to his understanding of fifteenth-century culture and of humanism’s place in it.¹¹⁴

Poetae and oratores

By dividing the humanists between poets and orators, *poetae* and *oratores*, Facio is the first of our authors to explicitly differentiate humanists as a group from other learned or professional categories and to endow them with their own peculiar labels. The meaning of the first, *poeta*, is clear enough, but the second is more problematic. Instinctively we think of an orator as a public speaker, someone who delivers orations, and those familiar with the lexicon of humanist Latin will quickly note that ambassadors were also called *oratores*. Such a definition, however, covers only part of the range of humanist usage, and it does not pertain to all the men grouped here under this particular rubric. Indeed, Facio has a much broader concept in mind.

¹¹³ Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, pp. 396–397; Kristeller, “The Humanist Bartolomeo Facio,” pp. 275–276.

¹¹⁴ The importance of the prefaces has been recognized and exploited to reconstruct Facio’s vision of the relationship of men of politics and arms to civil society in Albanese, “Lo spazio della gloria,” p. 231ff.

Grasping the comprehensive nature of the terms *poetae* and *oratores* is the first step to understanding his conception of humanism.

Facio treats poets first, as he states in his preface, “because they are the oldest and are attested before orators.”¹¹⁵ Poetry is also more difficult, he explains later, since it must organize its words according to strict meter.¹¹⁶ Meter is indeed the key to understanding who counts as a poet. None of those singled out as such dedicated himself exclusively to this field. Rather, the deciding factor is the imitation of classical Latin meters, i.e., quantitative meters based on vowel length, in whatever poetry each wrote. Apart from hexameter and certain forms used in hymns (e.g., iambic dimeter), such meters had largely disappeared in the Middle Ages and been replaced with simpler schemes based on stress accent and rhyme. Only with Giovanni Pontano – the muse of Biondo’s poetic optimism, whom Facio met in Naples but who would first truly flourish in the decades after Facio’s writing – would the full range of classical lyric meters (such as sapphics and alcaics) be restored.¹¹⁷

Orators, for their part, are quite similar to poets, “since both deal with the force and the proper use of words.” Furthermore, both must “master language” if they do not want to look “feeble and foolish.” Orators of Facio’s day, however, suffer a disadvantage with respect to their ancient counterparts: the scope of their activity has been radically reduced. Of the “three genres . . . which the ancient orators were accustomed to handling, . . . only one has been left to our orators.” Facio refers to the three traditional categories of rhetoric – judicial or forensic, deliberative, and demonstrative or epideictic – of which the first had become “the realm of the jurisconsults,” and the second was no longer the bailiwick of Latin but of the vernacular.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Facio, *DVI*, p. 3: “A Poetis vero, quoniam ii antiquissimi, et ante Oratores fuisse traduntur, scribere ordiar.”

¹¹⁶ More precisely, he says in his preface to the section on orators that prose is easier than poetry because it does not adhere to strict meter. See note 118 below.

¹¹⁷ On the disappearance of classical meters in the Middle Ages and the rise of rhythmical verse, see A.G. Rigg, “Latin Meter,” in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols. (New York, 1982–1989), vol. VII, pp. 371–376; and D. Norberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Medieval Latin Versification*, tr. Grant C. Roti and Jacqueline de La Chapelle Skubly (Washington, DC, 2004), pp. 48–80. See also note 93 above.

¹¹⁸ Facio, *DVI*, p. 7: “I shall proceed from poets to orators, for the two are close kin. Their shared attribute is a near equal concern with the power and proper use of words, and the fact that poets, too, would seem barren and foolish if they lacked a method to their speech . . . But there have always been more orators than poets, as their compositions are freer with regard to meter and thus easier to craft. And yet, if we engaged in the three genres of oratory which were customary for the ancients, perhaps the orator would be worthy of no less admiration [than the poet]. But of the three genres only one has been left to our orators. For the judicial is the realm solely of the jurisconsults, and we have given up the deliberative, as we no longer use it [i.e., deliberative Latin

Renaissance orators were consequently confined to demonstrative rhetoric, the genre of praise and blame which classically took the form not only of funeral orations, ceremonial speeches, and flashy display pieces, but also of biography and history.¹¹⁹ Orators were thus rhetoricians who exercised their activity – the mastery of language – in both spoken and written forms.

Still, relatively few *oratores*, such as Ambrogio Traversari, Leonardo Giustinian, and Guarino Veronese, are actually mentioned as delivering orations.¹²⁰ On the other hand, many humanists are said to have written *orationes*. For example, Leonardo Bruni's invective against Niccolò Niccoli is entitled *Oratio in nebulonem maledicum*, and Poggio's and Filelfo's invectives are called "orationes invectivas," although none of these *invectivae* was intended for oral delivery.¹²¹ Similarly, Facio refers to his own *De viris illustribus* as an *oratio*.¹²² Furthermore, as in Piccolomini's work, the *orator* Niccoli is mentioned as never having written anything,¹²³ nor is his reputation said to rely on oratory. Finally, Chrysoloras, certainly not known

oratory] in a council or with princes but rather attempt to persuade and dissuade in the vernacular" ("A Poetis ad Oratores transgrediar. His enim maxime cum poetis illa cognatio, atque affinitas est, quod utrique circa vim, ac proprietatem verborum prope aeque desudant, et quod Poeta, nisi dicendi rationem teneat, jejunus, atque ineptus . . . videatur . . . Sed oratorum semper utique major numerus, quam poetarum fuit, quod liberioribus adstricta numeris illorum dictio est, atque ideo contextu faciliior. Quamquam si tria genera causarum persequeremur, quae antiqui oratores tractare consueverunt, fortasse non minus admirandus orator, quam poeta videretur. Sed ex tribus generibus unum modo oratoribus nostris relictum est. Nam et iudiciale totum jureconsultorum est, et deliberativum omisimus. Neque enim amplius in Senatu, aut apud Principes eo utimur, sed vulgari sermone aut suadere, aut dissuadere aliquid nitimur").

¹¹⁹ According to the standard Aristotelian conception of the three genres of rhetoric (*Rhetoric*, book I, chapter 3), the thread running through all the species of demonstrative rhetoric is that the audience is not asked to render judgment about what is shown, or demonstrated, to it; the audience is a spectator (as opposed to judicial and deliberative rhetoric, where the audience must choose between people, points of view, courses of action, and so on). See George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (London, 1980), pp. 72–75; and Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, tr. Matthew T. Bliss, Annemiek Jannsen, and David E. Orton (Leiden, 1998), §§61.3, 239–254.

¹²⁰ Cf. Facio, *DVI*, pp. 11 (Traversari), 12–13 (Giustinian), and 17–18 (Guarino). For Giustinian, the Venetian statesman and author of Latin orations, Latin translations of Plutarch, and popular vernacular songs, see Franco Pignatti, "Giustinian, Leonardo," in *DBI*, vol. LVII (2001), pp. 249–255.

¹²¹ Cf. Facio, *DVI*, pp. 5, 10, 17. The disjunction between spoken and written *oratio* is heightened if one considers that the great model for humanist invective was Cicero's (spoken) oration *In Pisonem*. See Davies, "An Emperor without Clothes," pp. 101–102 and *passim*. On Cicero's *In Pisonem*, see Severin Koster, *Die Invektive in der griechischen und römischen Literatur* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), pp. 210–281.

¹²² Facio, *DVI*, p. 76: "nostra terminabit oratio."

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12, although here the explanation is more flattering: "Nevertheless he wrote nothing in either Latin or Greek, having been content with the writings of the ancients" ("Nihil tamen latine, aut graece scripsit scriptis veterum contentus").

for his speeches, writings, or style in Latin, is the very first orator in the collection.¹²⁴ In the context of Facio's *De viris illustribus*, then, an *orator* turns out to be someone who "deals with the force and the proper use of words." That is, anyone who works with *oratio*, which can mean variously oration, any kind of prose work, style, or simply formal, ordered speech in general (as opposed to informal speech less attentive to rules). An orator is thus a master of language, of rhetoric, of eloquence.¹²⁵

Thus the primary characteristic of Facio's humanists is their proficiency in language. But which one(s)? Typically the biographies begin by stating specifically which languages the humanist knew.¹²⁶ Nearly all are said to be masters of Latin and Greek, and the combination is so common that it is sometimes referred to simply as "both languages."¹²⁷ Only one humanist, Giannozzo Manetti, is said to know a third: Hebrew. This is a reminder of how uncommon, indeed unimportant, Hebrew was for fifteenth-century humanists, apart from a few outliers like Manetti and Pico, and even of how suspect it could be.¹²⁸ We are a long way from the foundation of the Collegium Trilingue at Louvain and the positive reception Reformers like Melanchthon gave Hebrew. Facio reports Manetti's achievement – one we consider remarkable – without enthusiasm: "Giannozzo Manetti of Florence is praised for his knowledge not only of Latin and Greek but also of Hebrew."¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 8. Facio even apologizes for Chrysoloras' deficient Latin, saying that he "was not ignorant of Latin" ("litterarum quoque latinarum non ignarus") and that he translated Plato's *Republic* "as well as he could" ("ut potuit").

¹²⁵ Cf. Cicero, *De officiis*, II.48. See also Giuseppe Billanovich, "Auctorista, humanista, orator," *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale*, 7 (1965), pp. 143–163, at 160–162 for the use of *orator* as a fifteenth-century term for 'humanist.'

¹²⁶ E.g., Leonardo Bruni (Facio, *DVI*, p. 9): "Bruni was one of the best educated in Greek and Latin . . ." ("Leonardus Arretinus Graecis, ac latinis literis in primis eruditus . . ."); Carlo Marsuppini (p. 12): "Marsuppini knew Latin and Greek very well . . ." ("Carolus Arretinus latinae, ac graecae linguae doctissimus . . ."); Francesco Barbaro (p. 15): "Barbaro the Venetian was trained in Latin and Greek . . ." ("Franciscus Barbarus Venetus latinis, ac graecis literis praeditus . . .").

¹²⁷ E.g., Francesco Griffolini (Facio, *DVI*, p. 15): "Griffolini was an expert in both languages . . ." ("Franciscus Arretinus utriusque linguae peritia . . .").

¹²⁸ See Paul Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti, and Desiderius Erasmus* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 102–104; Daniel Stein Kokin, "The Hebrew Question in the Italian Renaissance: Linguistic, Cultural, and Mystical Perspectives," PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2006; and Erika Rummel, *The Humanist–Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). For a less pessimistic and also less nuanced view, which does not cite Rummel, see Dvora Bregman, "Hebrew Literature and Language," in *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul F. Grendler, 6 vols. (New York, 1999), vol. III, pp. 121–125.

¹²⁹ Facio, *DVI*, p. 19: "Jannotius Manettus Florentinus litterarum non latinarum tantum, et graecarum, sed etiam Hebraicarum cognitione laudatur."

The vernacular, for its part, is never mentioned as a mode of humanistic expression. Thus Facio is now the third author in a row to exclude the vernacular from the world of humanism completely – and this despite devoting entries to two authors now considered to be among the age's most important humanist contributors to the *volgare*: Bruni and Leon Battista Alberti.¹³⁰ Facio himself is known to have prepared an Italian translation of Isocrates' *To Nicocles* at the request of Alfonso's son Ferrante. Yet it was a duty he performed with obvious discomfort and from which he tried to distance himself.¹³¹ When it came to literature, Facio's sympathies were solely with Latin. Moreover, as noted above, he laments the historical reality that Latin *oratores* were excluded from the vernacular realm of deliberative rhetoric.¹³² This passage merits closer attention. After claiming the demonstrative genre for humanists but relinquishing the forensic to the juriconsults, Facio continues: "we have given up the deliberative, as we no longer use it in a council or with princes but rather attempt to persuade and dissuade in the vernacular."¹³³ The vernacular is portrayed here as a competitor to Latin and, although a legitimate means of persuading and dissuading, as excluded from the bona fide *genus demonstrativum* of humanism. Thus although humanists would have used the vernacular when participating in government business, they were only *oratores* when they communicated in Latin.

The particular importance of Greek as a second language is underlined by the ordering of the biographies. Chrysoloras is the first orator treated, and the first thing said of him – and thus the first thing said of any orator – is that "he was the first to bring Greek back to Italy after about seven hundred years of disuse."¹³⁴ The next five humanists were all students of his. Like Biondo Flavio, Bartolomeo Facio is keen to stress the central place of Greek in humanism. Accordingly, nearly as many humanists as are given credit for knowing Greek are also remembered for at least one translation. Most are cited for more than one, many from several different authors, some for

¹³⁰ For an overview of the relationship between Latin and the vernacular in Quattrocento Italian humanism, including the role played by Bruni and Alberti, see M.L. McLaughlin, "Humanism and Italian Literature," in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 224–245. See also Hankins, "Humanism in the Vernacular."

¹³¹ See Bentley, *Politics and Culture*, p. 69. ¹³² Cf. Witt, *Footsteps*, p. 451.

¹³³ See note 118 above.

¹³⁴ Facio, *DVI*, p. 8: "Manuel Chrysolora Constantinopolitanus literas graecas, quae jam supra septingentos ferme annos in Italia obsoleverant, primus ad Latinos ex Graecia reportavit." The meaning of this strangely precise yet mysterious chronology is unclear. Facio's source is undoubtedly Bruni's *De temporibus suis*. See Bruni, *Memoirs*, pp. 320–321 (par. 24).

multiple genres, and a few even for translating both classical/pagan and religious texts.¹³⁵ Leonardo Bruni and George of Trebizond were especially prolific; the lists of their translations go on for nearly an entire page each.¹³⁶

Less common but still central to the humanist literary production Facio reports were original works in Latin, with the main genres being letters, works of history, dialogues, and poetry (especially love poetry and epigrams). Less frequently noted are works of moral philosophy, orations, treatises, style guides, and biography.¹³⁷

In addition to concerning themselves with language and producing classicizing writings – both original works and translations – Facio’s humanists share a passion for classical culture in general. First, Chrysoloras’ restitution of Greek to Italy can be seen as a restoration of the Italians’ classical heritage, a central component of which, beginning with Cicero’s contribution to and transformation of Roman high culture, was Greek language and literature.¹³⁸ For Facio’s endless inventories of humanist translations emphasize not so much the practice they afforded in Latin composition (which was Biondo’s point), but rather the availability of Greek literature itself. He also mentions that the ancients, too, engaged in translation – specifically naming Cicero – thus implying that this is a way for the humanists to imitate them.¹³⁹ Greek and its literature are not the only ancient things that Facio proudly announces have been brought back into current use. He praises the restoration of ancient literary genres like the elegy and the reintroduction of ancient cultural traditions, such as the practice of poetic crownings (whose revival he erroneously attributes to the

¹³⁵ Mentioned for translating both pagan and religious literature are Leonardo Bruni (Facio, *DVI*, p. 10), Ambrogio Traversari (p. 11), Leonardo Giustinian (p. 12), Niccolò Perotti (p. 14), and George of Trebizond (pp. 20–21).

¹³⁶ Facio, *DVI*, pp. 10, 20–21. Of Bruni it is said (p. 10): “just about no one of our age left so many monuments to his own industry” (“nec fere alius quisquam nostri temporis aequae multa monumenta industriae suae reliquit”).

¹³⁷ Facio mentions Manetti’s *De illustribus longaevis* (Facio, *DVI*, p. 19, which he calls *De viris senioribus omnium superiorum aetatem*) and a work that might be Aeneas Sylvius’ *De viris illustribus* (p. 26, here called *De egregiis dictis ac factis clarorum hominum* and said to be dedicated to Alfonso of Aragon).

¹³⁸ Cf. James Hankins, “Greek Studies in Italy: From Petrarch to Bruni,” *Quaderni Petrarqueschi*, 12–13 (2002–2003), pp. 329–339, at 338, who stresses that “throughout the Italian Renaissance, Greek was always learned primarily for the enrichment of Latin culture; Cicero’s perspective on Greek culture remained the dominant one.”

¹³⁹ In his biography of Giovanni Aurispa, he mentions that the Sicilian humanist “translated Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, just like Cicero had in his youth” (Facio, *DVI*, p. 19: “. . . ac Xenophonis librum, qui *Oeconomicus* inscribitur, in latinum traduxit, quem Cicero adolescens, ut scriptum reliquit, e graeco in latinum converterat”).

emperor Sigismund).¹⁴⁰ The general passion for everything antique can perhaps best be seen in the biography of Niccolò Niccoli, who is singled out for his “enthusiasm” not only “for Greek and Latin” but also “for . . . all of antiquity”:

He called back into use painting, statuary, ancient script, and the other noble arts which are entrusted to the minds and hands of artisans but which had fallen into disuse among us. He discovered many lost books, and he most diligently sought out the works of Cicero and of many other illustrious authors. He assembled a vast collection of Greek and Latin books on all kinds of art and learning. . . . When about to die he donated his books to the library that Cosimo de’ Medici had built in San Marco, so that even in death he could be a benefit to the living.¹⁴¹

In the person of Niccoli humanism embraces “all kinds of art and learning,” all the “noble arts,” the *artes nobiles*, of antiquity. Perhaps this is why in other biographies Facio does not speak of *bonae litterae*, as Biondo does, but rather of the apparently more global *bonae artes* and *studia humanitatis* to refer to humanism.¹⁴² In addition to *poetae* and *oratores*, he also refers to humanists simply as *homines docti*,¹⁴³ learned men.

Praise and virtue

None of this eloquence or zeal for antiquity, none of the *bonae artes* or the *studia humanitatis* would have been possible without money. As in the works of Piccolomini and Biondo, here, too, the *homines docti* are said to work as apostolic secretaries, chancellors, advisors, and diplomats to

¹⁴⁰ Facio, *DVI*, p. 4: “Antonio Beccadelli . . . roused the elegy from its long sleep and brought it back into the light” (“Antonius Panormita . . . elegiam, quae perdju jacuerat, rursus in lucem excitavit”); pp. 72–73: “the emperor Sigismund was the first to crown poets with laurel after the ancient custom” (“Sigismundus Imperator . . . primus Poetas more majorum laurea corona exornavit”).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12: “Graece, et latinae linguae, omnisque antiquitatis studiosus picturam, statuariam, ac veterem elementorum formam, caeterasque artes nobiles, quae vel ingenio, vel manu artificum commendantur, quae jamdju apud nos consenuerant, in usum revocavit. Librorum quoque exornandorum inventor, operum Ciceronis, et aliorum illustrium Auctorum diligentissimus inquisitor fuit. Librorum magnam copiam tum Graecorum, tum latinorum cujuscumque artis, et doctrinae comparavit . . . Moriens Bibliothecae, quae erat in Marci Evangelistae Templo, quam Cosmus Medices effecerat, libros suos, ut mortuus etiam viventibus prodesset, dedicavit.”

¹⁴² Facio uses *bonae artes*, e.g., in his biography of Antonio Beccadelli (Facio, *DVI*, p. 4); *studia humanitatis*, e.g., in his biographies of Giovanni Pontano (p. 6), Gasparino Barzizza (p. 28), and Andrea Biglia (p. 40). To refer to a more general group of intellectual disciplines including theology and philosophy, Facio uses *liberales disciplinas*, e.g., in his biographies of Aeneas Sylvius (p. 26) and Alfonso of Aragon (p. 78).

¹⁴³ E.g., Facio, *DVI*, p. 76.

earn their keep and feed their passion.¹⁴⁴ But Facio emphasizes another element, one that was only implicit in the other authors, which stands out in the biography of Niccoli quoted above: patronage. There Cosimo de' Medici is remembered for building the library at San Marco. So much is repeated in his own biography, where it is said that he paid for the purchase or copying of all the codices housed in it.¹⁴⁵ He is also praised for his own literary interests and the time he spent with "philosophers."¹⁴⁶ Pope Nicholas V is likewise honored for financing a library (the Vatican Library), whose collection he secured by sending cohorts of humanists to scour Europe for the "authors lost as casualties of war." Facio also mentions Nicholas' patronage of Greek studies, which took the form of fixed annual salaries to support translation activity.¹⁴⁷ The greatest praise, however, is reserved for Facio's own patron, King Alfonso of Aragon. He is mentioned constantly throughout *De viris illustribus* for his financial support of individual humanists.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, his construction of an

¹⁴⁴ The evidence for these occupations is too overwhelming to even begin to cite.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Facio, *DVI*, p. 57. Which is actually both true and strangely not in contradiction with what Facio says about Niccoli's will. Niccoli did indeed donate his books to Cosimo's library at San Marco. The vast majority of those books, however, were technically owned by Cosimo, who lent Niccoli the money to buy them and was never paid back. See Ullman and Stadler, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence*, pp. 3–15; Eugenio Garin, *La biblioteca di San Marco* (Florence, 1999), pp. 15–23 [reprinted from *La Chiesa e il Convento di San Marco a Firenze*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1989–1990), vol. I, pp. 79–148].

¹⁴⁶ Facio, *DVI*, p. 57: "Learned in both Latin and Greek, he divided his life between philosophers and those who govern the republic, devoting as much time to letters as was left over from his administration of public affairs" ("litteris non tam latinis modo, sed etiam graecis instructus vitam inter philosophos, et eos, qui Rempublicam gerunt, mediam agit tantum litteris temporis impertiens, quantum sibi a negociis Reipublicae superest"). For Cosimo de' Medici as a patron of humanism, see James Hankins, "Cosimo de' Medici as a Patron of Humanistic Literature," in Francis Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo "il Vecchio" de' Medici, 1389–1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 69–94.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Facio, *DVI*, pp. 75–76, esp. 76: "He established a library at huge expense containing a nearly infinite number of Greek and Latin books. He sent humanists to Greece, Germany, and France in search of the authors lost as casualties of war" ("Bibliothecam condidit innumerabilium prope librorum tum graecorum, tum latinorum ingenti sumptu missis in Graeciam, Germaniam, Galliam viris doctis, qui amissos bellorum casibus auctores conquirerent"). On Nicholas' patronage of the Vatican Library and translations from Greek, see Massimo Miglio, "Curial Humanism Seen through the Prism of the Papal Library," in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 97–112; and Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, 1985), pp. 282–288.

¹⁴⁸ Namely Beccadelli (Facio, *DVI*, p. 4), Filelfo (p. 5), Pontano (p. 6), Antonio Cassarino (p. 16), Poggio (p. 17), Manetti (p. 19), Valla (p. 23), Pier Candido Decembrio (p. 24), Piccolomini (p. 26), Theodore Gaza (p. 28). Add Facio himself, and Alfonso is explicitly said to have patronized more than one quarter of the humanists mentioned in *De viris illustribus*. On Alfonso, see Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous: King of Aragon, Naples, and Sicily, 1396–1458* (Oxford, 1990); Bentley, *Politics and Culture, passim*; and for a brief treatment of Alfonso as patron, Mario Santoro, "Humanism in Naples," in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. III, pp. 296–331, esp. 296–300.

important library (in Naples) is noted, and he is lauded beyond all others for his personal excellence and largesse:

An enthusiast of philosophy, theology, and all antiquity, well educated in the other liberal disciplines, endowed by nature with a remarkable memory, he honors and supports each and every learned man of our age.¹⁴⁹

What is the purpose of all this praise, which in this case is as incredible as it is generous? Certainly Facio hopes with his *De viris illustribus* to repay, justify, or induce more of the goodwill already shown to him by Alfonso, as well as to honor friends and respected colleagues in general. But the scope of the work is too broad for its contents to be explained by personal interest alone. Here Facio's general preface can provide further insight into his greater design:

Of the many things that it might be worthy to entrust to posterity, the most amenable seemed that of writing about the famous men of our time and of recent memory. And I judged that in celebrating such men I would have a very good chance of earning the thanks of many. For the knowledge of famous men brings no little pleasure, and it also bears fruit. Their example excites naturally well-ordered souls, acting like a kind of stimulus to honor, to reputation, to glory. For when they see those names made immortal through the writings of others, they put all their enthusiasm and energy into pursuing virtue in the hopes of attaining immortal glory themselves. It happens, however, that when we contemplate the lives of the ancients, the soul submits to a kind of despair – despair of not being equal to their glory; they take on the status of minor divinities, and we regard them with wonder, as was the intention of the writers who honored and praised them. But with the living, no matter how outstanding or distinguished they might be, the vision of them before us excites hope – the hope that we might manage to equal them in virtue or glory.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Facio, *DVI*, pp. 77–78: “Philosophiae, Theologiae, atque omnis antiquitatis studiosus, ceterisque liberalibus disciplinis excultus, memoriaeque admirabili a natura donatus eruditos quosque nostri saeculi viros ornat, ac fovet.”

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2: “Ex multis autem, quae mihi occurrebant digna, quae posteritati mandarentur, illud prae caeteris jucundum fore existimavi, si de illustribus Viris aetatis, memoriaeque nostrae scriberem. In quo illud saltem assequi me posse arbitratum sum, quod in ejusmodi Viris celebrandis multorum mihi mortalium gratiam compararem. Habet enim in se non parum voluptatis, ac fructus clarorum hominum cognitio, quorum exempla animos natura bene constitutos, quasi stimuli quidam ad decus, ad honestatem, ad gloriam concitant. Nam cum illorum nomen immortale factum alienis scriptis vident, et ipsi toto studio, ac nixu virtuti incumbunt, quo immortalem gloriam consequantur. Accedit eodem, quod cum nobis veterum exempla proponimus, subit *animus* desperatio quaedam, ne eorum gloriam adaequare valeamus, cum plane illos veluti Numina quaedam habeamus, atque admiremur: usque adeo a scriptoribus celebrati, atque illustrati sunt. Praesentes autem, etiamsi excellentes, magnificique fuerint, quoniam in oculis nostris observantur, nobis non omnino auferre spem videntur, quin jis vel virtute, vel gloria pares esse valeamus” (the

Thus the purpose of Facio's praise is to encourage his readers to virtue through the promise of glory. The better Facio makes the humanists and their patrons sound, the more likely it is that they will be imitated in their pursuit and support of Latin eloquence and in their love of antiquity. The glory he promises to his readers is ensured by his very own text, which, by recording the greatness of his own time, makes the representatives of that greatness *ipso facto* worthy of imitation. Here Facio achieves a neat inversion of the relationship between *facta* and *verba*. It is initially the deeds that inspire the words and make them worth writing. Once those words, however, are used to glorify the deeds, they themselves become an inspiration to further deeds, and, in this case, greater virtue. Here the power of the word comes to exceed the power of the deed, at least insofar as virtue is concerned.

Facio's text is even more subtle, for he ends up arguing that this power of the word makes his age superior to those preceding it. He begins by positing a certain relativity of the virtue and culture of ages, claiming that the only difference between them is the presence or absence of writers to record them:

I often wonder why in so many centuries so few have written about illustrious men, especially since there should have been some writers in every age to make literary monuments to the men who excelled in any one art or study, such that we could know who the most outstanding men were of each period. For no age is so unrefined and devoid of virtue as to produce no renowned or outstanding men. But since they lacked the praise of the eloquent, their reputation died with them.¹⁵¹

The salient difference between ages is the presence or absence of eloquent men willing and able to praise them. Yet Facio has already argued that it is precisely praise that drives men on to greater virtue. To be more specific, it is the praise of one's contemporaries that functions in this way. Praise of the ancients, on the other hand, leads to "despair." Ancient writings on ancient exemplars of virtue are therefore inadequate; the genre must be continued

word in italics, *animus*, is Albanese's reading of ms. Vat. lat. 13650, reported in Albanese, "Lo spazio della gloria," p. 217; Mehus prints *animus*).

¹⁵¹ Facio, *DVI*, p. 2: "Admirari autem soleo, cur ex tot seculis tam pauci de illustribus Viris scripserint, cum quidem singulis aetatibus aliqui scriptores extitisse debuerint, qui eos Viros, qui sua aetate in aliqua arte, aut studio excelluerunt, literarum monumentis commendarent, ut singularum aetatum praestantissimos quosque Viros scire possemus. Neque vero unquam ulla aetas adeo inculta, atque virtutum expers fuit, quin aliqui praeclari, atque praestantes Viri in ea extiterint. Sed quoniam caruerunt disertorum hominum praefatio, propterea illorum nomen una cum vita finitum est."

or taken up – in this case resuscitated by Facio in his contribution to humanism – in one's own age. Eloquent men are thus necessary not only to record the virtue of an age, but also to increase it. This is the grounds for the excellence of Facio's own time, and the responsibility for this greatness lies wholly within the realm of humanism, the realm of the orators who "deal with the force and the proper use of words."

Yet another step can be taken with Facio's text. His *De viris illustribus* gives high praise to eloquence in its own right. It celebrates eloquent men in the same pages with princes and kings, rich private citizens, and masters of war – the typical sitters for portraits of virtue. Facio's initial point was that the eloquent praise of a thing turns it into an object of desire and its attainment into virtue. Now eloquence is praised by eloquence. Thus eloquence itself becomes an object of desire; the attainment of eloquence becomes virtue.

Much ink has been spilled in the last thirty years over the relationship of humanism to virtue. This is especially the case in the context of humanist education, a subject that will be addressed in the following chapters.¹⁵² Here I would like to draw attention to two unexpected aspects of Facio's characterization that can help us to understand how humanists understood humanism. First, Facio is the only one of our first three authors to make any connection at all between virtue and eloquence. This suggests, as Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine have argued, that the link posited between the two that we find in the letters of Guarino Veronese, for example, or in the oft-cited humanist educational treatises is more genre-specific than has been widely appreciated.¹⁵³ Whereas it suited the professional needs of humanists intent on either defending humanism against competitors or on selling humanism to a non-humanist or, more importantly, a potentially humanist audience, it appears to have been less appropriate when speaking to an audience composed of actual humanists. This does not necessarily mean that the sentiment was not held or heartfelt, but certainly that it was felt less urgently when talking to insiders. Biondo obviously wrote the *Italia illustrata* in part with other humanists in mind, and he is silent about virtue despite his unbounded enthusiasm for humanism. Aeneas Sylvius' audience is unclear, but it is nothing short of astounding that he does not call the humanists virtuous when recounting their accomplishments in the context of the *virii illustres* of European politics and culture. For he

¹⁵² See below, pp. 127–129, 171, 206–207, 263.

¹⁵³ Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 1–28.

is the author of one of the most cited of the aforementioned educational treatises: *De liberorum educatione*, or *The Education of Boys* (1450).¹⁵⁴ In that work, whose date of composition coincides almost exactly with his *De viris illustribus*, he consistently recommends his brand of education in eloquence precisely in terms of the virtue it affords. Why leave out that seemingly essential aspect of humanism when praising Bruni, the most eloquent man of his age? To return to Facio, his primary audience included his patron, Alfonso, from whom he hoped to continue reaping rewards for the one thing he had to offer: eloquence. Of course he praises eloquence as virtuous, just as he praises those who underwrite eloquence as virtuous.

Yet it seems wrong to attribute Facio's statements entirely to petty self-interest, and this brings us to the second noteworthy aspect of his point of view. The humanist educators (including Piccolomini) tended to draw a logical connection – admittedly fuzzy – between the labor of learning or the specific curriculum on the one hand and the virtue attained on the other, and they were keen to stress the social and political applications of their instruction.¹⁵⁵ Facio, however, does not assert a simple, generic equation between humanism and virtue, nor does he say anything about eloquence's social value (in terms of mores), of its political usefulness, or of the education required to attain it. Rather he makes a complex argument about the power of the word and its relationship to the power of the deed; indeed, he gives (eloquent) words the status of great deeds. In his view, eloquence does not merely lead to virtue (although it can); eloquence itself is virtuous. In his own way Facio, like Piccolomini and Biondo, presents eloquence as a good in itself. It is the good which makes his age superior.

Drawing boundaries

The praise of eloquence finds its way into nearly every humanist biography. For example, Antonio Loschi “toiled for eloquence.”¹⁵⁶ Pier Paolo Vergerio “pursued eloquence with very great zeal and excelled in it.”¹⁵⁷ Bruni, “although not scorning the other arts, gave himself over to eloquence.”¹⁵⁸ Traversari was “famed for his eloquence.”¹⁵⁹ These quotations come from

¹⁵⁴ In *Humanist Educational Treatises*, pp. 126–259.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. vii–ix and *passim*; Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 117–121. See also note 154 above.

¹⁵⁶ Facio, *DVI*, p. 3: “eloquentiae operam dedit.” For the Milanese chancellor and papal secretary Antonio Loschi, see Paolo Viti, “Loschi, Antonio,” in *DBI*, vol. LXVI (2006), pp. 154–160.

¹⁵⁷ Facio, *DVI*, p. 8: “Eloquentiam summo studio secutus in ea re excelluit.”

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 9: “Caeteras artes non aspernatus eloquentiae sese dedit.”

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 11: “eloquentia claruit.”

the first eleven biographies alone. Evidence of the centrality of eloquence abounds. Perhaps the most forceful indication that eloquence is at the heart of humanism comes from the biography of Leon Battista Alberti:

The Florentine Baptista Alberti was not only eloquent, but he also seemed to have been born for the rest of the liberal arts. To eloquence he added philosophy and mathematics. An enthusiast of painting and learned in it to boot, he issued one book on the art's principles. He also wrote two books on architecture and another two which he entitled *Intercoenales*. But still he is more to be counted among the philosophers than among the orators.¹⁶⁰

Looking past the factual inaccuracies of this description of Alberti's oeuvre, we note that it is Alberti's eloquence, if anything, that identifies him as a humanist.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless he devoted himself to too many other disciplines, especially philosophy, and thus his humanist status is in doubt. Despite his eloquence, "he is more to be counted among the philosophers than among the orators."¹⁶²

Alberti's biography thus indicates a boundary that, in Facio's view at least, separates humanists from devotees of other intellectual disciplines. Philosophy – the natural philosophy of scholasticism – was a realm apart, as were theology, law, medicine, mathematics, and music.¹⁶³ Nothing

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 13: "Baptista Albertus Florentinus non eloquens modo, verum et ad omnes reliquas liberales artes natus videtur. Eloquentiae, ac Philosophiae Mathematicas addidit. Picturae studiosus, ac doctus de artis ipsius principiis librum unum edidit. Scripsit et de Architectura libros duos, *alios item duos* quos intercoenales inscripsit. Inter Philosophos tamen magis, quam inter Oratores numerandus." The words italicized in the Latin text, "*alios item duos*," are omitted by Mehus but are supplied from ms. BAV, Vat. lat. 13650 by Albanese, "Le sezioni *De pictoribus*," p. 69. For Alberti, see Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti*.

¹⁶¹ Alberti's opusculum on art, *De pictura*, was written in three books, not one; his work on building, *De re aedificatoria*, is composed of ten books; and the *Intercoenales*, short works of wit in imitation of Lucian, are collected in eleven books. Cf. Leon Battista Alberti, *De pictura*, ed. and tr. Cecil Grayson (London, 1972), but now also *On Painting: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, ed. and tr. Rocco Sinisgalli (Cambridge, 2011); *L'architettura (De re aedificatoria)*, ed. and tr. Giovanni Orlandi (Milan, 1966), as well as *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, tr. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); and *Intercoenales*, ed. and tr. Franco Bacchelli and Luca D'Ascia (Bologna, 2003), as well as *Dinner Pieces*, tr. David Marsh (Binghamton, NY, 1987).

¹⁶² Cf. Biondo's similarly ambiguous description of Alberti. When treating Florence, he says that Alberti was endowed with a "noble and versatile intelligence in many good arts" (Biondi, *II*, ii.32: "nobili et ad multas artes bonas versatili ingenio"), but when reporting Alberti's famous raising of the ancient ships sunk in Lago di Nemi, he calls him "the great mathematician of our age" (iii.47: "geometra nostro tempore egregius").

¹⁶³ Despite the exclusion of traditional, scholastic philosophy from humanism, it is obvious from their numerous translations of ancient philosophers (as reported in the biographies) that the *oratores* were actively interested in both moral and natural philosophy. Nevertheless, this interest did not generally manifest itself in a traditional, scholastic context, such as disputations, *summae*, or university professorships in philosophy. When it did cross the line, such as in Alberti's too active

prevented humanists from taking an interest in these fields. Indeed, many are said to have studied, even to have loved, the one or the other, but they are portrayed as alien to humanism proper.¹⁶⁴

Not only does Facio distinguish humanism from these other pursuits, he also implies that it stands above them in the hierarchy of praise and glory. It is clear from the prefaces to each section that Facio has organized his material in order of descending importance. Admittedly, the order of the individuals within each group supposedly has no particular meaning: "I will observe neither the rank nor the relative ability of the men treated in each section, but each will be set down as he comes into my mind." Nevertheless, he has taken special care to "write about each individual class and type separately."¹⁶⁵ While honoring all the various occupations and pursuits, he intends to demonstrate why humanism is the highest.

After the humanists come the jurisconsults, who, as Facio explains in the section preface, have the honor of preserving society through law. "Yet very few have distinguished themselves" in his time, "nor have they achieved glory for speaking or writing to the same degree as the orators." Perhaps it is a more difficult art to learn, he reasons, but the cause could also be its great cost, which prevents most people from buying the necessary books

pursuit of mathematics and the scientific aspects of painting (or does Facio have other, unnamed works or activities in mind?), the humanist is "rather to be counted among the philosophers than the orators."

¹⁶⁴ For the sake of example, here follow some humanists said to have studied or loved these other disciplines. The list is not exhaustive. Philosophy: Leonardo Giustinian (Facio, *DVI*, p. 12), Vittorino da Feltre (p. 13), Francesco Barbaro (p. 15); theology: Giannozzo Manetti (p. 19), Bessarion (p. 20), Piccolomini (p. 26); law: Vergerio (p. 8), Bruni (p. 9), Guiniforte Barzizza (p. 14); medicine: Giovanni Marrasio (p. 5), Gregorio Tifernate (p. 25), Theodore Gaza (p. 28); mathematics: Alberti (p. 13), Vittorino da Feltre (p. 13), George of Trebizond (p. 20). Only one humanist is said to love music: Leonardo Giustinian (p. 12).

¹⁶⁵ Facio, *DVI*, pp. 2–3: "It was my intention to commemorate the famous men of each skill and class who enjoyed fame in my time. But if perhaps I omit anyone on account of either forgetfulness or ignorance, please do not be angry with me. Once I have remembered or been told about them, these people will be mentioned in a second book. At any rate I will observe neither the rank nor the relative ability of the men treated in each section, but each will be set down as he comes into my mind. I have only taken care of this one thing: to write about each individual class and type separately. I think it will be more pleasing to the mind that way" ("Meum vero institutum fuit de cuiusque facultatis, atque ordinis Viris claris memorare, qui tempestate mea claruerunt. Quod si fortasse quempiam per oblivionem, vel per inscientiam omiserio, ne sit quaequo, qui mihi succenseat. Post enim, ubi commeminero, vel admonitus fuero, in alterum librum conferetur. Ego tamen neque dignitatem, neque excellentiam hominum in suo genere in iis commemorandis observabo, sed ut quisque mihi prior occurrerit, ita a me literis mandabitur. Unum illud curae fuerit, ut de singulis quibusque ordinibus, ac generibus seorsim scribam. Sic enim res, ut opinor, fiet cognitu jucundior"). Facio's claim to follow no particular order within each section is belied, however, by a deliberate reordering of the biographies in what appears to be his working manuscript of the text, BAV, Vat. lat. 13650. Cf. Cortesi, "Il codice Vaticano," pp. 414–415.

and thus from pursuing it.¹⁶⁶ Similar to law is medicine, the next category, which likewise is said to contribute to the well-being of the city, this time by preserving the health of its citizens. The section *De medicis* includes not only physicians, however, but also philosophers and theologians – “since there can be no doctors without philosophy”¹⁶⁷ – thereby embracing all the practitioners of the standard university disciplines of medicine, theology, and philosophy. These individuals, along with the jurisconsults, were in point of fact far more numerous than humanists, but in Facio’s account they are treated in a mere eleven biographies. For their part, the jurists numbered only nine, and Facio was sure to say in their regard that “very few have distinguished themselves, nor have they *achieved glory for speaking or writing* to the same degree as the orators” (emphasis mine). We have seen the importance of glory and its intimate connection to eloquence. In contrast to the forty-one humanists treated, Facio memorializes the combined twenty jurisconsults and (broadly construed) doctors less for their writings than for their teaching. In terms of geographical and temporal extension, therefore, teaching, being of necessity a local phenomenon (in an age before e-learning), must be secondary to writing, which in the form of manuscripts and printed books could travel as far as zealous readers and enterprising booksellers might take them – to say nothing of their Horatian potential for permanence. Following Facio’s logic regarding eloquence and virtue, teaching cannot help but seem ephemeral when compared with writing. What Facio said about ages can thus be applied equally to disciplines: the absence of written eloquence diminishes glory.

Facio also portrays humanists as more comprehensive in their interests and their studies than the jurists and scholastics. Whereas many of the humanists dedicated themselves to other disciplines, including law, philosophy, theology, and medicine, they appear to be traveling a one-way street.

¹⁶⁶ Facio, *DVI*, p. 29: “Now the jurisconsults will be treated. They are deserving of honor, as their studies pertain to the preservation of human society. On that account men of this type have always been held in high esteem in well-ordered cities . . . Yet very few have distinguished themselves in our time or memory, nor have they achieved glory for speaking or writing to the same degree as the orators. This is either because this art is more difficult to learn, or because of lack of money. For these studies require a great number of books, and they cannot be fit into the family budget” (“Nunc de Juris Consultis dicendum. Iis etenim suus dandus est honor, quorum studia pertinent ad conservationem societatis humanae, atque ob eam quidem causam semper ejusmodi Viri in civitatibus bene constitutis summo honore affecti sunt . . . Sed sane admodum pauci hac nostra tempestate memoriaeque floruerunt, nec porro tam multi, ut in dicendo, aut in scribendo Oratores gloriam consecuti sunt, sive quod ars illa sit cognitu difficilior, sive, quod multi propter angustias rei familiaris, magnam enim librorum vim postulant haec studia, amplecti non possunt”).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36: “Non erit autem indecens, ut arbitror, claros aliquot Philosophos, et Theologos Medicis adjungere, quandoquidem absque Philosophia Medici esse nulli possunt.”

Indeed, only one philosopher is also described as a devotee of humanism: the Augustinian Andrea Biglia, who taught moral and natural philosophy at the University of Florence and wrote commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De caelo*. Interestingly, Piccolomini was wont to consider Biglia a humanist, on account of his historical works but likely also due to his association with the group around Leonardo Bruni and his teaching of rhetoric. Facio, too, says that his "reputation is not much less among the orators than it is among the philosophers."¹⁶⁸

Obviously, these categories are somewhat fluid, and attribution to any particular one is a matter of subjective judgment. Could Facio not have included Biglia with the humanists? And more importantly, should not some of the humanists rather have been classified as theologians, philosophers, or doctors? Facio himself was clearly of two minds with regard to Leon Battista Alberti. Another case in point is Giovanni Marrasio, Facio's fourth *poeta*. True, his *Angelinetum* generally earns him humanist status (as it does here), but, Facio complains, "he would have become even better in this genre if he had continued his study of poetry. But he dedicated himself to medicine, and after becoming a priest he gave up poetry."¹⁶⁹ Why not just call him a doctor who in his youth wrote poetry? What makes him so different from Biglia?

Probably little else than that Facio is primarily interested in glorifying humanism (and did not want to reduce the already small number of poets!). He sees it as his age's greatest ornament, plainly superior to – more honorable, more worthy of glory, more virtuous than – the other pursuits. This applies just as well to the *belle arti* of painting and sculpture, whose practitioners follow the doctors and are the last in the line of creators (unless the great citizens, *condottieri*, and princes that follow them can be considered creators of states), and who number only seven. Although their pursuits are at the center of the modern perception of the Renaissance, for the humanist Facio they are at the periphery of high culture.¹⁷⁰ In his

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 40. Facio notes that Biglia taught philosophy, but also that he "cultivated the *studia humanitatis*" and wrote a "history of his own times" and "a sizeable Latin dictionary" ("... Senis et alibi Philosophiam professus est. Studia quoque humanitatis coluit: historiam sui temporis scripsit... Volumen praeterea de verborum latinorum interpretatione haud parvum reliquit. Inter Oratores non multo minor, quam inter Philosophos judicatus...").

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 5: "... fuisseque in hoc genere major evasurus, si poeticae studia persecutus esset. Sed medicinae deditus, ac deinde Sacerdos factus ab eo studio discessit."

¹⁷⁰ Facio does, however, deploy the *ut pictura poesis* topos and admits that it might have been *convenientius* to treat the painters directly after the poets. Cf. Facio, *DVI*, p. 43: "now we come to painters, although it might have been more proper to put the painters after the poets. For, as you know, there is a great affinity between the two, a painting being nothing other than a silent poem" ("nunc ad pictores veniamus, quamquam fortasse convenientius fuit, ut post poetas pictores

work, humanism is not only central to the Renaissance. Humanism *is* the Renaissance – the renaissance, or revival, of classical eloquence and thus, so his argument goes, of a level of virtue only possible in a world where eloquence reigns. The pursuit of eloquence renders Facio's age superior to those preceding it. Humanism makes his age superior.

* * *

Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *De viris illustribus*, Biondo Flavio's *Italia illustrata*, and Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* are among the earliest mature and self-conscious attempts to depict the movement of humanism. The first was in all likelihood unknown to the latter two, and the second, although undoubtedly a source for the third (whose author had in turn supplied information for the *Italia illustrata*), did not determine its structure or contents.¹⁷¹ The clarity of their conceptions of humanism is thus all the more striking, as is the substantial agreement among them. When humanists decided to tell their own story, they had remarkably coherent raw materials on which to draw. With their harmony they show themselves cognizant of occupying an independent, well-defined, and widely recognized field of culture.

The names used for this field of culture in the first half of the fifteenth century were *litterarum studia* (Piccolomini), *bonae litterae* (Flavio), *bonae artes*, and *studia humanitatis* (Facio). Three emphases immediately come to the fore, one on *studia*: "studies," as the generalization of the object of one's zeal, enthusiasm, or exertion; another on *bonae*: which could be translated simply as "good" (as in excellent) but whose primary meaning has the sense of "morally good" and "beautiful"; and a final one on *litterae*: literature, or the mark of learning and culture, which is the locus of the *bonum* and the material object of the *studia*.¹⁷² Humanism is the nexus of these three

locarentur. Est enim, ut scis, inter Pictores, ac Poetas magna quaedam affinitas. Neque enim aliud est pictura, quam poema tacitum").

¹⁷¹ As mentioned above (p. 39), Facio seems to say that Piccolomini's *De viris illustribus* was dedicated to Alfonso. Being in the Aragonese court, he likely would have had access to Piccolomini's work, yet his *De viris illustribus* betrays no borrowing from Piccolomini's. Piccolomini knew Facio's *De viris illustribus*, but not until years after his own was finished. See the correspondence between the two men in Facio, *DVI*, pp. 107–108. Facio seems to have relied on Biondo in his treatment of artists; see Albanese, "Le sezioni *De pictoribus*," pp. 62, 69–70, and *passim*. Although Albanese provides evidence that "i due testi di Biondo e Facio sono strettamente connessi tra loro" (p. 62) with regard to the treatment of visual artists, this does not seem to be the case for their treatment of humanists.

¹⁷² Cf. A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine, histoire de mots*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1967), pp. 73 (*bonus*), 363 (*littera*), and 658 (*studeo*). Cf. also the *Thesaurus linguae latinae* (Leipzig, 1900–), vol. II, coll. 2079–2127 (*bonus* and *bonus* [*bene*]) and vol. VII.2, coll. 1514–1529 (*littera*).

concepts. Decisive is also the meaning of *humanitas*, i.e., the essential trait of human beings.¹⁷³ If in his highest nature man tends to what is good (in the broad sense of excellent, moral, and beautiful), then the connection between *humanitas* and the obsession with eloquence, achieved through the medium of *bonae litterae*, becomes immediately intelligible. The humanists' enthusiasm for beautiful (eloquent) and morally good literature (i.e., the genres and species of ancient literature not devoted to purely theoretical or practical disciplines like logic, law, or medicine) makes sense if one considers that theirs was a world in which the good, the beautiful, the noble, and the moral were generally thought to coincide. Indeed, this notion of *bonae litterae* held into modern times, when its cognate *belles lettres* still denoted "beautiful literature" or "good literature" in the sense of writing that is morally good or has a morally good effect.¹⁷⁴ Hence also the use of a term like *oratores* (in Facio) to describe the devotees of humanism. On the one hand, their medium was language (*oratio*, *litterae*), and so they should rightfully call themselves *oratores*, or masters of rhetoric (in the broad sense of the art or science of language). On the other hand, if, as Cicero and Lorenzo Valla argued, man distinguishes himself from animals primarily through his use of language, then *studia humanitatis* – the accumulated zeal for *humanitas* – must comprehend the mastery of language necessary to the *orator's* eloquence.¹⁷⁵ It is in this conception of man and his potential that Facio's equation of virtue and eloquence finds its true home.

Strangely, for us, Facio is the only one of our first three authors to use the term *studia humanitatis*. More than terminology is at stake in this observation. Kristeller more or less equated humanism with the cycle of educational and university disciplines that, in his view, made up the *studia humanitatis*: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy.¹⁷⁶ When these categories arise in our authors, however, they do so in the form of genres of writing or speaking, not as disciplines or subjects of study. Furthermore, no author describes humanist involvement in education except insofar as he sings the praises of humanist educators, whose contribution, in turn, consists of teaching eloquent Latin, not Kristeller's *studia humanitatis*. One could argue that Facio, by explicitly separating humanists from lawyers,

¹⁷³ Cf. *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, vol. VI.3, coll. 3075–3038 (*humanitas*).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Vito R. Giustiniani, "Homo, humanus, and the Meaning of Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46:2 (1985), pp. 167–195, at 168. On the medieval and Renaissance notion of grammar as a moral art, see Gehl, *A Moral Art*.

¹⁷⁵ See Giustiniani, "Homo, humanus," pp. 168–169; and Salvatore I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo, riforma e controriforma* (Rome, 2002), pp. 566–568 [tr. in *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture*, pp. 121–123].

¹⁷⁶ Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, pp. 22–25, 88–100.

physicians, and philosophers, envisions humanism similarly to Kristeller. Yet he divides humanists not along Kristeller's lines but according to the rubric of *poetae* and *oratores*. Although we can lump the humanists' interests and teaching subjects into the categories discerned by Kristeller, it is instructive that Piccolomini, Biondo, and Facio did not do so when they composed the first synthetic accounts of humanism.

It is equally instructive that they did not rely on negative definitions. That is, they do not define humanism against an "other" that it was not but rather on the basis of its own distinct characteristics. There is a strange silence in their texts where we might expect to hear the anti-scholastic polemics familiar from Petrarch or Valla, or else the "noisy advertisements," as Kristeller characterized the verbal assaults hurled in the "battle of the arts," meant "to neutralize and to overcome the claims of other, rivaling sciences."¹⁷⁷ Instead, our authors portray humanism unmistakably on its own terms: as the project to revive ancient, Ciceronian Latin eloquence. Aeneas Sylvius and Biondo explicitly equate good Latin with Cicero, place its ultimate demise in the fifth century (after the age of Jerome and Augustine), and characterize just about all intervening times and writers as bereft of eloquence. According to both, Petrarch began the renewal of good Latin but did not achieve true eloquence. Then opinions diverge. For Piccolomini it appears that this project was not yet complete in his own times, although Bruni had become "most similar to Cicero," whereas Biondo claims twice that his age abounds in eloquence. In any case, they agree that whatever eloquence there was owed its existence to a Greek, the Byzantine educator and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras. Biondo posits other necessary factors, too, such as the inspirational teaching of Giovanni da Ravenna, the hunt for lost ancient Latin literature, and the proliferation of humanist teachers.

In the big picture, the arrival of Greek is portrayed as the turning point in humanism's development and as the formative moment for it as a movement, helping it to evolve beyond Petrarch's linguistic limitations and to spread throughout Italy. On the one hand it was necessary for Latin eloquence. Piccolomini does not elaborate on this, but the message of his oracle is clear: "Chrysoloras . . . reintroduced the ancient method

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 92. Cf. Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate*; Francesco Petrarca, *Invectives*, ed. and tr. David Marsh (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), esp. pp. 222–363 (*De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*); Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, pp. 31–35; and Camporeale, *Umanesimo, riforma, e controriforma*, pp. 151–176 [tr. in *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture*, pp. 175–202, along with the Latin text and the English translation of the relevant sections of Valla's *Encomium of St. Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 306–311 (§§13–20)].

and Ciceronian style of writing.” Biondo is more specific, explaining that ancient Latin eloquence reappeared thanks to the practice in Latin composition afforded by translation from Greek. On the other hand, knowledge of Greek became an indispensable characteristic of humanism in its own right. All three authors mention its mastery as an accomplishment, and Facio goes further by making it central to a humanist profile. Chrysoloras is the first orator in his collection, and nearly all the others are said to know Greek and to have translated Greek texts into Latin. What is more, Facio does not associate Greek with Latin style but instead treats it as a distinct category of achievement. Once reintroduced to Italy by Chrysoloras, Greek gave access to lost pagan and Christian literature alike, although the former is mentioned more often.

While translations seem to have been the major product of the humanists’ erudition in Latin and Greek, they were accompanied by a vast array of original compositions: letters, histories, poetry, dialogues, orations, invectives, and so on. Indeed, some sort of output in a recognized genre of classical Latin letters – either spoken or written – was fundamental to humanist status. Niccolò Niccoli is the exception that proves the rule; he produced nothing but demonstrated in other impressive ways his enormous knowledge of and devotion to classical letters.

Niccoli also embodies Facio’s broader conception of humanism as a passionate desire for Greco-Roman antiquity. “The arbiter of knowledge” was an amateur antiquarian, in the best sense of both terms. He collected statuary, reconstructed ancient orthography, and searched for lost works of literature. Most importantly, he was instrumental in restocking the library of ancient texts for the common benefit of the larger community of humanists. The establishment of libraries, moreover, is set into high relief by Facio, who connects not only Niccoli but also Cosimo de’ Medici, Nicholas V, and Alfonso of Aragon to such benefaction.¹⁷⁸

The latter three were among the great patrons of humanism, emblematic of its underwriting by wealthy private citizens, princes, and popes. Facio is emphatic about patronage, but its importance can just as well be inferred from Piccolomini’s biography of Niccolò d’Este and Biondo’s dedication to Nicholas. The boundaries of patronage could blur with professional

¹⁷⁸ It is worth noting that Alfonso is at least implicated in the composition of all three of the texts included in this chapter. There is no doubt that he was the initial impetus for *Italia illustrata* and the dedicatee of Facio’s *De viris illustribus*, and he might have also patronized Piccolomini’s *De viris illustribus*.

employment, which humanists most often found as secretaries, chancellors, diplomats, and teachers. Otherwise they are depicted as leading the religious life, like Traversari or Antonio da Rho, or as enjoying the benefits of private wealth, like Niccoli. Here we can note another interesting divergence between Kristeller's conception of humanism and the humanists' view of themselves. For Kristeller, humanists could be defined best as a professional class of rhetoricians, and their involvement with classical literature and language was inseparable from the exigencies of the professional context in which they operated.¹⁷⁹ Yet our authors, despite corroborating the basic facts about where humanists tended to work, do not evince any cognizance, beyond Facio's sensitivity to patronage, of belonging to a group defined by that employment.

Instead, Piccolomini, Biondo, and Facio describe an energetic, pan-Italian cultural movement not tied to any one person or milieu. The only non-Italians mentioned are Greek émigrés like Manuel Chrysoloras and George of Trebizond (as well as George's international students in Rome). Florence seems to be a particularly warm home for humanism in Piccolomini's text, but neither Biondo nor Facio favors it. Humanism pervades the peninsula. By general consensus its leading exponent is Leonardo Bruni, who is known not for civic engagement but for his Latin style. According to Piccolomini, "in writing Bruni exceeded everyone. For he was the most similar to Cicero, nor has our age found his equal." Bruni, as *Ciceroni simillimus*, embodied the renaissance of eloquence in the first half of the fifteenth century.

¹⁷⁹ See note 177 above.